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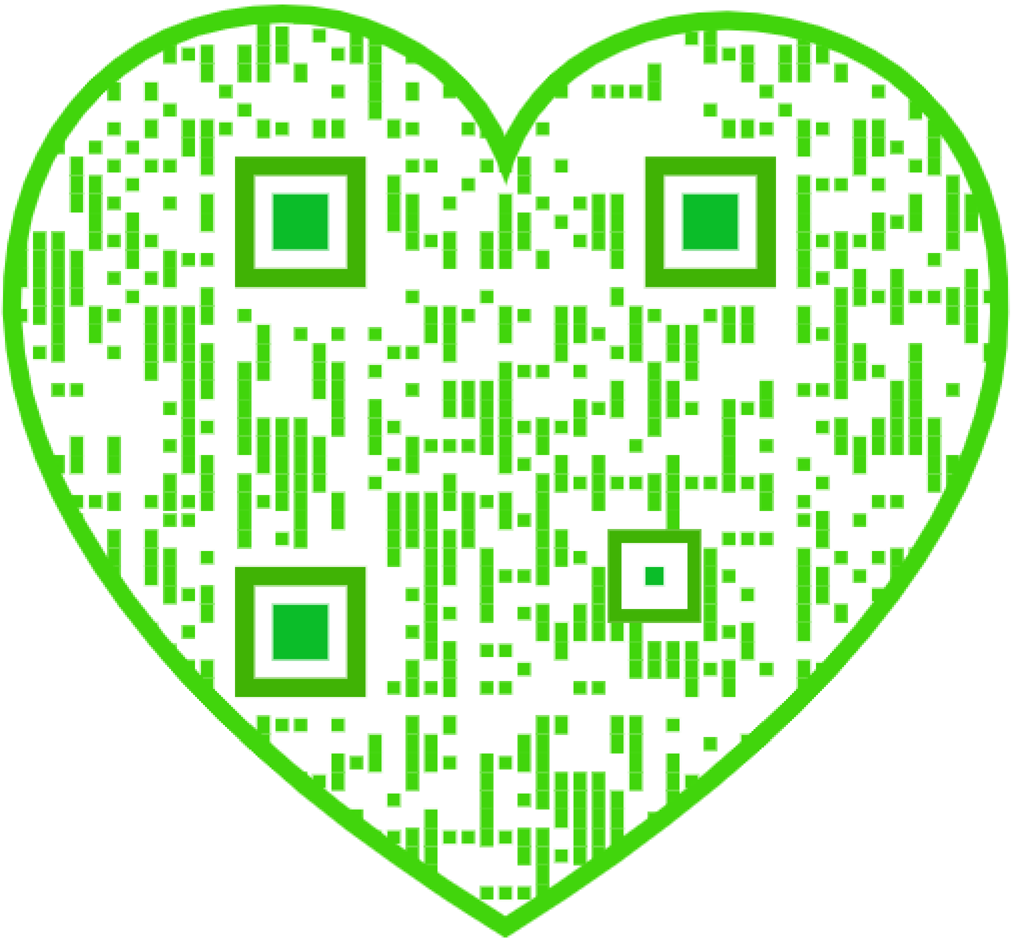

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COMMENT

WHAT LINKS THE VALKYRIE, T50 AND TOURBILLON?

Cosworth is embedded in motorsport history. Where to start? There's the 176 race wins, 10 constructors' and 13 drivers' championships the firm's engines have powered Formula 1 cars to. Not to mention 10 Indianapolis 500 winners and numerous title-winning rally cars. Road cars? How about the Mercedes 190E, Fords Escort and Sierra Cosworth, Audi RS6 B5 and more. What a history.

You might be forgiven for thinking it is all history, though. After all, Cosworth last won a grand prix in 2003 (for the late Eddie Jordan's squad) and it left the grid 12 years ago – and no longer has its name attached to high-performance road cars.

Yet, as Felix Page finds out on p50, Cosworth is thriving, manufacturing incredible combustion engines for some of the finest hypercars of the modern era. The Aston Martin Valkyrie, Gordon Murray T50 and Bugatti Tourbillon all feature remarkable powerplants made in Northampton.

Cosworth remains an incredible success story – and a reminder that British engineering is still unrivalled. Which should give pause for the future: Cosworth is firmly focused on high-performance combustion engines, with no plans to go electric. EVs might be the future for mainstream cars, but any steps the government introduces to get there must ensure Britain's brilliant manufacturing firms can continue to thrive.

James Attwood, associate editor
james.attwood@haymarket.com

Meanwhile, online...

autocar.co.uk

Nissan GT-R history lesson

The R35 is about to shuffle (sideways) off this mortal coil. But what is next? And what makes a car worthy of the GT-R badge?

Hero cars of the 1980s

Big hair, shoulder pads, Ronnie & Maggie… and some amazing cars that often caught the zeitgeist, including the BMW Z1.

we are in a Suzuki Swift

Gen Z Suzuki slay

Join our resident Young People on TikTok to watch a Suzuki Swift review… like you've never seen before. Probably.

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NEWS

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AUDI PLOTS SPORTS COUPE COMEBACK WITH TT INFLUENCE

CEO says "sports cars are an integral part" of the brand's future line-up

Audi is considering a new halo model that captures the spirit of some of its most iconic sports cars – and the original TT is a key potential source of inspiration.

Having retired the TT and the R8 supercar in the past 18 months, Audi is currently without a dedicated two-door sports car in its line-up for the first time in decades. But CEO Gernot Döllner has suggested that a re-entry to this segment could form part of an extensive overhaul of the company's product line-up and positioning.

Asked at the company's recent 2024 financial results presentation whether he would consider reintroducing a sports car to the brand's portfolio, Döllner said: "For sure. That's part of the brand's DNA and we have to find the right way, timing-wise, to integrate it into our portfolio."

He suggested it wouldn't be appropriate to hint at a portfolio expansion while the company is in the process of a wide-reaching restructuring programme that includes 7500 job cuts in Germany. But he said he has a "broad view on where Audi should be and where Audi is heading – and thinking in that direction, sports cars are an integral part of such a set-up".

Döllner referenced the original TT as a car of particular importance to Audi's heritage and said the firm's new design boss, Massimo Frascella (who arrived at Audi last year following a long career at JLR), is a particular fan of the late-1990s coupé.

"I've discussed that car so much with Massimo," said Döllner. "That was an inspirational car for his whole career. When he was a young designer at Giugiaro, he took a day off when the TT was launched in Italy, went to the Audi dealer in Milan and sat in the showroom for a day just looking at the car.

"The absolutely fantastic aspect is that it seems that he somehow had Audi in his mind for his whole career. Now is the time to let Audi out of the mind of Massimo Frascella."

Notably, in his previous role Frascella was heavily

Audi's CEO and design boss are both admirers of the late-1990s Mk1 TT

Q&A GERNOT DOLLNER, CEO, AUDI

Audi's volumes dipped 12% in 2024, but is that a realistic benchmark for your more upmarket future?
"We will step out of smaller segments but we'll enter new segments with a broader portfolio in the [mid-sized] segments - so it's equal, I would say. Overall, it's our plan to gain market, but we will review it in the direction of value over volume; we have to find the right volume. I'm not the right one for a volume push; I'm the right one for substantial results."

Will Audi rethink its approach to interior design for future models?
"We are quite happy with what we are launching right now, but we always have to see what is the next trend and will it be part of our design? Even more important is the UX/UI experience, so that will very much come with next-generation software. That's more of an influence on the interior than design trends."

The new RS5 is set to be a PHEV. Is there still room for electric RS cars?
"The RS E-tron GT shows what electro-mobility at Audi is capable of. It's definitely a sports car with four seats, and it shows what RS in the electric world can be. We believe that RS can be all-electric. It fits to the brand."

AUTOCAR
IMAGE

involved in the rebirth of the Land Rover Defender, which nods to the legacy of its long-running 4x4 namesake while embracing a modern, minimalist new design ethos – and Döllner believes this approach to styling makes him a logical fit at Audi.

"I would say he tries to optimise as much as possible, to take everything away that you don't need for the expression, and I think that's a unique talent," said Döllner.

Minimalism and functional design are defining tenets of the Bauhaus art movement that so heavily influenced the original TT, suggesting some of that car's defining characteristics could be reinterpreted for a new age.

However, Döllner was emphatic that "you can't copy your past" as a car maker. "You really have to analyse what the essence of Audi is and use the essence to come up with something absolutely new," he said.

"These copies of successful cars of the past are definitely the wrong way," he added, although he did say it is "thinkable" that Audi could bring back some historic model names.

Any potential Audi return to the sports car segment isn't expected to happen for some time, though. Following a turbulent 2024 in which the firm's volumes reduced and its profit margin was squashed, Audi's immediate priorities are to bring a "future-proof" software architecture to market, benefiting from the Volkswagen Group's new joint venture with Rivian, and to successfully ramp up production of crucial new models such as the A5, A6, Q3 and Q5 in 2025.

After that, said Döllner, "is the time to talk about the right portfolio in these niche areas".

He added: "The transition takes all our energy right now and that definitely starts in the core segments."

Asked whether Audi could offer a dedicated sports car with a plug-in hybrid powertrain, rather than as a pure EV, Döllner said he is "open-minded" but suggested that electric power makes more sense in an "everyday use" context.

"There's so much uncertainty that all this discussion delivers to the market that I would say in the long term, in the sports car segment, there will be a place for fully electric sports cars," he said.

Döllner spoke about the need for Audi to lean on "synergies" within the Volkswagen Group in certain segments, particularly at the lower end of its EV line-up, where it shares platforms with Volkswagen, Skoda and Cupra. He also said there's scope for technical collaboration with Audi's premium siblings, Porsche and Lamborghini, in more niche segments.
FELIX PAGE

ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH TURNS 214MPH DROP-TOP

New Volante version brings the same serious performance as the coupé

Aston Martin has revealed the drop-top version of its 824bhp V12-powered Vanquish flagship.

Taking the Volante name, it is technically identical to its coupé sibling, which arrived in September 2024 to revive the Vanquish nameplate as one of the few V12 cars on the market.

In drop-top form, this is one of only two new GTs – alongside the Ferrari 12Cilindri Spider – to offer open-top driving with a 12-cylinder soundtrack.

The fabric roof is operated by a K-fold mechanism, similar to the arrangement in the new Vantage Roadster. The roof can be opened in 14 seconds and closed in 16 seconds.

Underbody bracing is fitted to recover some of the rigidity lost during the transition from coupé to roadster and, as a result, the Vanquish Volante is 75% stiffer laterally than the previous DBS Volante.

However, it is also 95kg heavier than the Vanquish coupé, at 1930kg, which is due mainly to that extra bracing and the roof mechanism.

With the same outputs of 824bhp and 738lb ft from its twin-turbocharged 5.2-litre V12, this extra heft means the Volante is 0.1sec slower than the coupé in the 0-62mph sprint, at 3.4sec. Its claimed top speed is the same 214mph as the coupé.

The Volante otherwise shares its hardware with the coupé, including Bilstein DTX adaptive dampers, a ZF-supplied eight-speed automatic gearbox and an electronic limited-slip differential.

Inside, it gets a 10.25in digital instrument panel and an infotainment

OFFICIAL PICTURES

ASTON MARTIN
VANQUISH

Roof folds out of sight in 14sec and can be shut in 16sec while on the move

WHAT THE VANQUISH VOLANTE MUST BEAT

	ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH VOLANTE	FERRARI 12CILINDRI SPIDER	BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT CONVERTIBLE SPEED	MASERATI MC20 CIELO	McLAREN 750S SPIDER
Price	£365,000 (est)	£366,500	£259,500	£224,825	£277,260
Engine	V12, 5204cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol	V12, 6496cc, petrol	V8, 3996cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol, plus electric motor	V6, 2992cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol	V8, 3994cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol
Power	824bhp at 6500rpm	819bhp at 9250rpm	771bhp	613bhp at 7500rpm	740bhp at 7500rpm
Torque	738lb ft at 2500-5000rpm	500lb ft at 7250rpm	738lb ft	538lb ft at 5500rpm	590lb ft at 5500rpm
Kerb weight	1930kg	1620kg (dry)	2636kg	1560kg	1389kg
0-62mph	3.4sec	3.0sec	3.4sec	2.9sec	2.8sec
Top speed	214mph	211mph	177mph	199mph	206mph

screen of the same size running Aston Martin's own operating software. A 15-speaker Bowers & Wilkins sound system is fitted as standard and extensive interior customisation will be offered through the company's Q by Aston Martin division.

Prices have yet to be confirmed, but the Vanquish Volante is expected to carry a relatively small premium over the £334,000 coupé. For reference, the DB12 Volante costs £13,500 (7%) more than the DB12 coupé, at £204,500.

Production of both variants of the Vanquish will be capped at fewer than 1000 cars per year. Deliveries will start between July and September.

The arrival of the Vanquish Volante completes Aston Martin's core line-up, which also consists of the Vantage, DBX 707, DB12 and mid-engined Valhalla.
CHARLIE MARTIN

> **"It has the same 824bhp and 738lb ft from its twin-turbo V12 as the coupé"**

■ **Vanquish road test, p32**

Luxurious-looking cabin has two 10.25in screens and a 15-speaker hi-fi

Its front styling, identical to the coupé's, leaves no doubt about its potency

Dolphin Surf will offer a range of more than 200 miles; on sale this year

NEW BYD EV TO DIP BELOW £20K IN UK

THE BYD DOLPHIN Surf will be one of the cheapest electric cars in the UK when it goes on sale later this year.

Known as the Seagull in China, where it costs the equivalent of around £8000, the model will be made more sophisticated for its launch in mainland Europe and the UK, including gaining new safety technology.

BYD executive vice-president Stella Li said that while the Dolphin Surf might "not be the cheapest" on sale, it will "be the best value".

It is not expected to undercut the £15,000 Dacia Spring, which is the current cheapest electric car on sale, but it is likely to be priced below models such as the Fiat Grande Panda and Citroën ë-C3. This would mean a starting price of less than £20,000 for a range in excess of 200 miles.

In China, it is offered with a choice of 30kWh or 38kWh batteries, giving ranges of 190 miles and 252 miles respectively, according to the country's generous CLTC testing regime. There is also a choice of 74bhp and 100bhp motors.

The Dolphin Surf – also known as the Dolphin Mini in some markets – will arrive as the eighth model in BYD's UK range, just after the Sealion 7 (p29).

NEXT-GEN BYDs: FULL CHARGE IN 6MIN

New-age electric cars from BYD will be able to theoretically fill up in just six minutes, bringing parity of usability between EVs and combustion cars ever closer.

This will be made possible by the Chinese car maker's new Super e-Platform, especially its latest 'flash-charge' lithium-iron-phosphate Blade battery.

Although BYD has yet to reveal the battery's capacity and weight, the company claims the pack can sustain a charging power of 1MW (megawatt) – far greater than the fastest-charging EVs currently on sale.

Showcased in the updated China-market Han L saloon and Tang L SUV, it allows the pair to add up to 249 miles of range in just a five-minute charge via BYD's newly developed 1000kW supercharger.

The company has yet to reveal plans to use the Super e-Platform for any UK-market models.

New platform and pack are showcased in latest Han L saloon

TERRAMAR TO PUSH CUPRA UPMARKET AS NEXT-GEN EV

SUV will share Porsche tech to turn all-electric and move up a class size

Cupra will electrify the Terramar SUV for its second generation by twinning it with the Porsche Macan Electric in a move that will take the brand further upmarket.

CEO Wayne Griffiths confirmed to Autocar that Cupra's large SUV will become its new flagship EV within the next decade.

It will join electric versions of the Formentor crossover and Leon estate. Both were confirmed to Autocar last year and they will bolster Cupra's electric line-up, which currently comprises the Born hatch and Tavascan fastback.

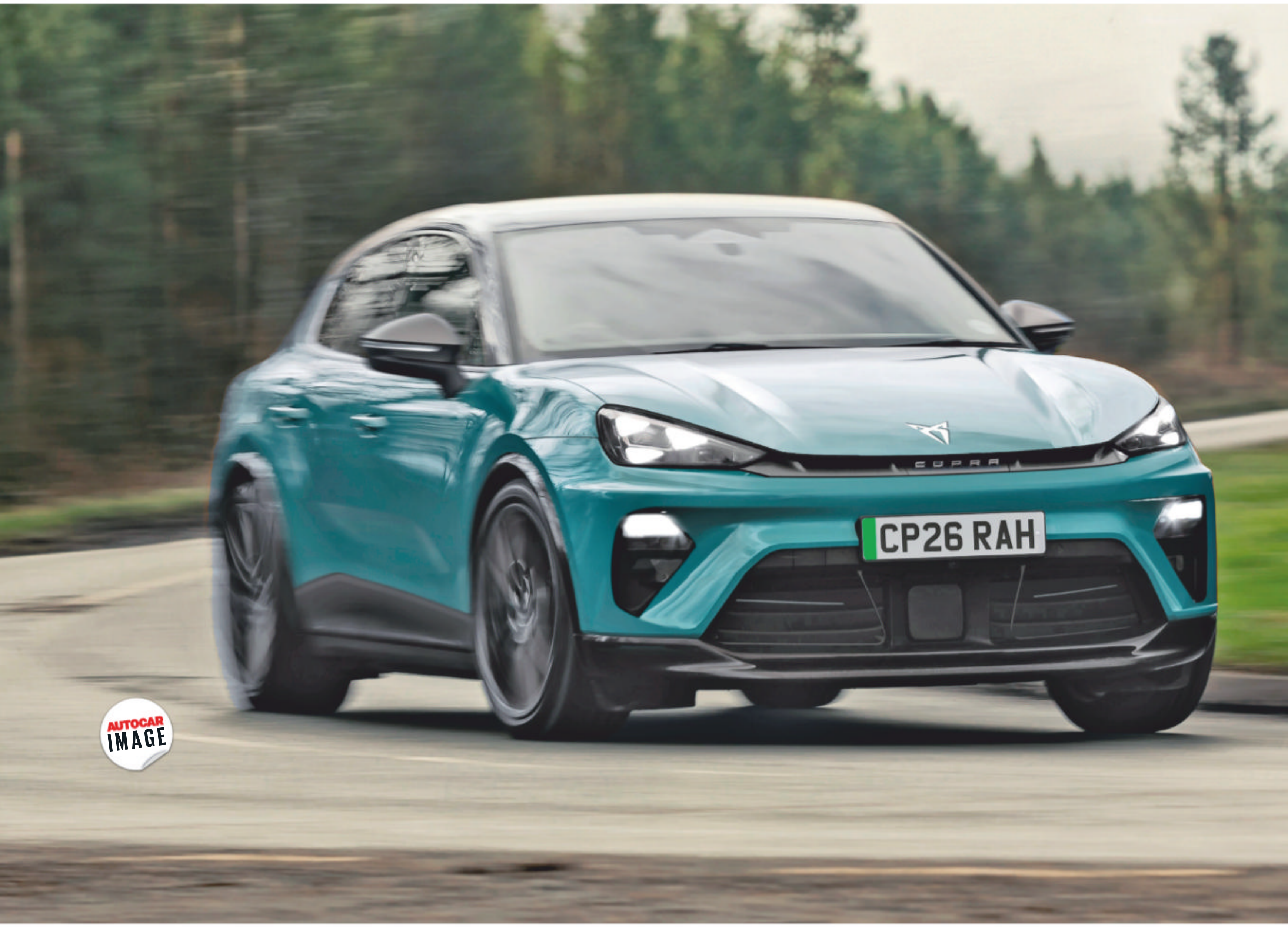
Griffiths told Autocar: "For the next generation, the next platform, we're looking at battery-electric vehicles succeeding both Formentor and later Terramar."

Given the Terramar was launched late last year and model life cycles normally last at least six years, the EV would be likely to arrive in around 2031, but Griffiths said the brand is "flexible" on dates for all its models.

"It'll join EV versions of the Leon estate and Formentor"

However, he said that as "both cars were brand new [or updated] and launched last year", they will "run until after the end of this decade". He added: "We can then make a decision based on how fast the [market's] EV adoption is – and that's a big thing."

The current sub-£40,000 SUV is based on the MQB platform of its Volkswagen Group parent and gives Cupra a footing in the hotly contested C-SUV segment. However, the EV will move



AUDI'S GOING EVEN BIGGER

Audi has been seen testing the Q9 SUV, set to be its largest and most opulent model to date. The BMW X7 rival is likely to be offered with three rows and a V8 PHEV powertrain. Expect a UK arrival in 2027.

FORTY BMWs IN THREE YEARS

BMW is embarking on a massive product offensive, launching 40 new and updated models over the next three years, CEO Oliver Zipse has said. Two will be its first Neue Klasse EVs, the iX3 and i3 (pictured).

Today's combustion-based Terramar will be replaced by a pure EV

Terramar EV will share powertrain and platform with Porsche Macan Electric

onto the bigger Premium Platform Electric (PPE) architecture, pushing it into the larger D-SUV sector.

Aligned with the Audi Q6 E-tron and Porsche Macan Electric, it is expected to share their batteries, motors and key chassis elements.

Power-wise, the Macan opens at 305bhp and tops out with 630bhp in Turbo form. While Cupra's sporty positioning means the Terramar EV will pack a punch, it is unlikely to push beyond the 509bhp offered by the £75,400 Macan 4S.

The current car, launched last year as a BMW X1 rival, offers up to 268bhp and is tuned with a focus on handling.

When the SUV was launched, Cupra said it was likely to be its final combustion model. Asked why the Terramar was not launched originally as an EV, Griffiths said: "We need to offer both [combustion and EV models] at the moment" because "nearly 90% of the market in Europe is combustion-engine sales." Last year, Cupra recorded 248,100 sales.

"If we only had the Tavascan [and Born EVs] and didn't have a Formentor or Terramar, we would be up the river without a paddle," said Griffiths. "At the moment, you have to bet on both [combustion and electric]. I'd prefer to say let's go all in [on EV]. But you can't do that right now."

WILL RIMELL

EU'S CHINA TARIFFS COULD FORCE SEAT TO 'FIRE PEOPLE'

Tariffs on China-built Tavascan could lead to Seat killing off the Ibiza

VOLKSWAGEN-OWNED Seat Group has warned that the impact of the European Union's new import tariffs on Chinese-built EVs may force it to stop production of the Ibiza and Arona and "start firing people" to claw back heavy losses and balance its sales mix.

The Spanish firm builds its £47,000 Tavascan SUV in China and has been absorbing the extra 20.7% import tax (on top of the previous 10%) imposed by the EU since October 2024.

The tariffs were brought in to combat government-subsidised Chinese brands undercutting European makers.

However, CEO Wayne Griffiths told Autocar that the tariffs "do not protect Europe" and "damage us", referencing the effect they have on the firm's ability to hit increasingly stringent emissions targets.

He warned the financial consequences in terms of lost sales and costly fines could result in Seat having to reduce its workforce and ICE car line-up.

Griffiths said: "This puts us potentially in a position where we will have to start firing people."

If tariffs are not removed, "we will have to stop building the Seat Ibiza and Arona" and "reduce combustion car [production]" to balance the company's sales mix. Seat has previously committed to significant updates for the Ibiza and Arona this year.

Griffiths said this threat was being heard and "there's a willingness" from EU legislators to make changes.

SEAT WILL MAKE EVs – BUT NOT UNTIL THE NEXT DECADE

Seat won't launch an electric car this decade – but the brand will need one if it's to survive in the future.

CEO Wayne Griffiths said: "For Seat to have a certain future, we need to have an electric future." A decision on its EV timeline will be made "at the end of the decade", he said.

Asked why Seat is willing to wait when others are launching EVs now, Griffiths said "Seat at the moment is in a good place" financially, with 310,000 sales last year – a 7.5% rise on 2023 – and a turnover of €4.8 million (£4.0m).

Any Seat EV would need to be highly profitable, he added, and current tech makes that hard to achieve at the desired price point.

Volkswagen is set to launch the £17k ID 1 in 2027 and has insisted that it will initially be the Volkswagen Group's sole EV offering in that price segment, ruling out a Seat version.

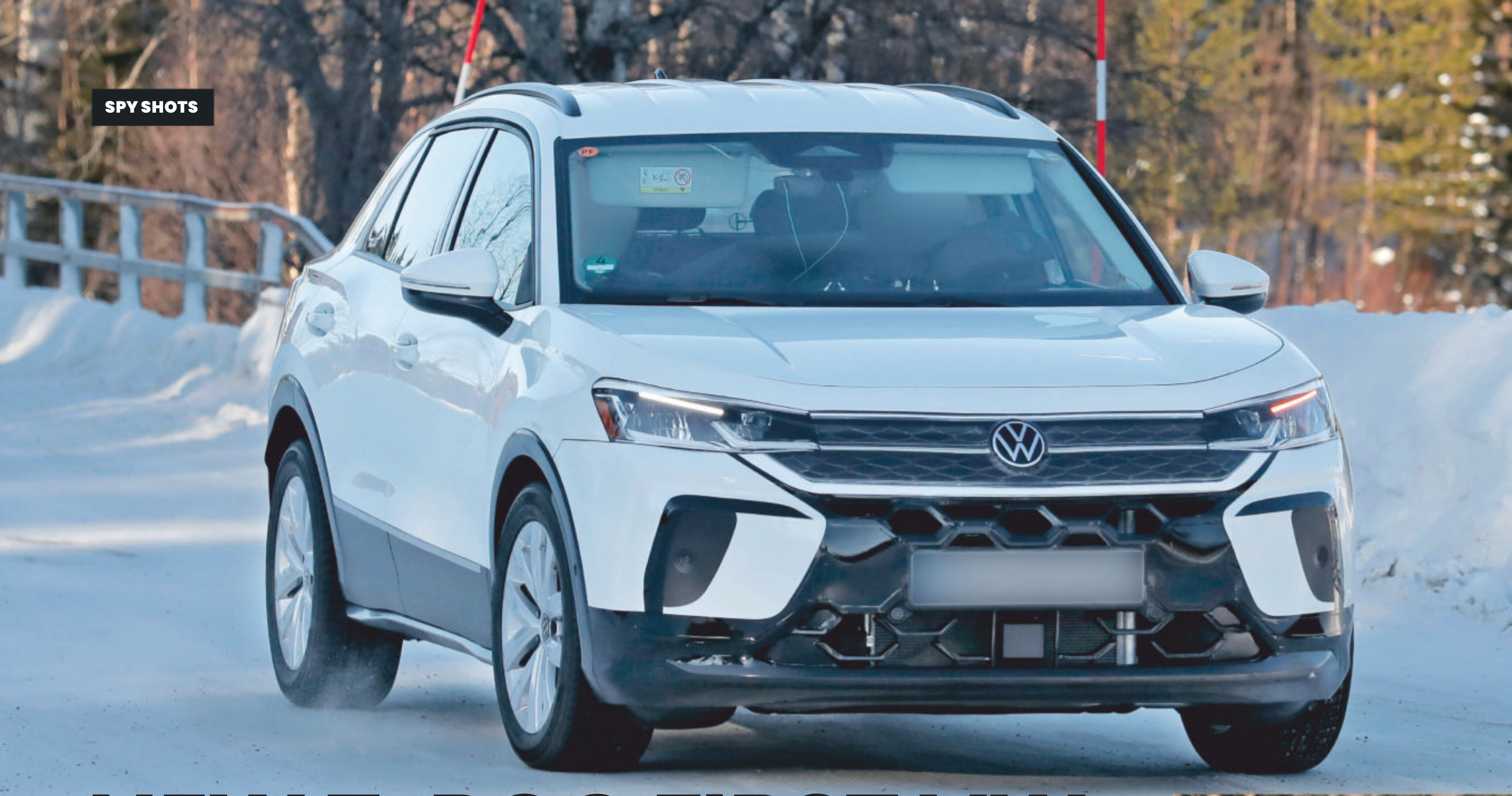
El-Born: proposed ID 3-based Seat EV became the Cupra Born

'IKEA AMI' LURES STELLANTIS

Stellantis has partnered Swedish quadricycle firm Luvly, so more Citroën Ami-style cars could be on the way. The tie-up is centred on Luvly's chassis design and flat-pack production method.

AUDI AXES A1 AND Q2 FOR EV

Audi will retire the A1 and Q2 next year to make room for a new entry-level EV. The newcomer is said to sit below the Q4 E-tron and serve as an electric alternative to the A3 hatchback and Q3 crossover.



NEW T-ROC FIRST VW TO GO FULL HYBRID

Puma rival to usher in an all-new VW Group hybrid set-up

Volkswagen will introduce a full-hybrid powertrain to its line-up for the first time, starting with the second-generation T-Roc, which will be unveiled at the Munich motor show in September.

The move marks a shift in VW's electrification strategy as it responds to slower than expected EV sales.

The new set-up combines a petrol engine with an electric motor and battery. The engine is expected to be a 1.5-litre turbo four that will help to drive the wheels and recharge the battery for limited electric-only driving. Outputs from 201bhp to 268bhp are planned, a source has told Autocar.

The tech differs from VW's current hybrid systems, which either require charging via an external source (plug-in hybrid) or cannot operate in pure-electric mode (mild hybrid).

After the T-Roc, the VW Golf and Skoda Octavia are tipped to be next in line for the set-up, followed by other models on the MQB Evo platform.

Cars using this new system will be badged as hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs), a VW spokesperson confirmed to Autocar.

The new T-Roc will be launched in the UK next year and is also expected to be sold with petrol and diesel powertrains. As our spy shots show, it will feature a more prominent front grille than the car it replaces as well as slimmer, more angular headlights.

WILL RIMELL

Smart #5 has 800V set-up and can charge at up to 400kW

OFFICIAL PICTURES

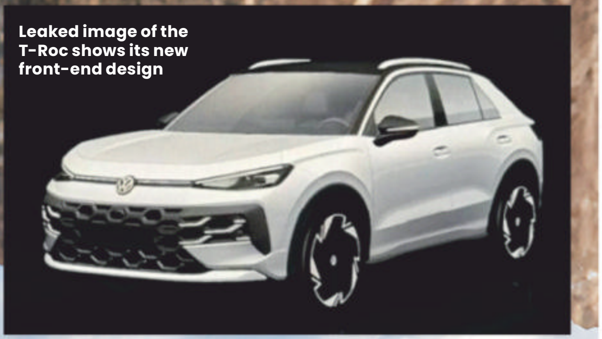
UK OWNERS TO GET 366-MILE SMART #5 FROM THIS AUTUMN

UK DELIVERIES OF the Smart #5 will begin in October.

The brand's largest car yet will be underpinned by an 800V electrical architecture and majors on in-car technology and driver assistance systems.

It will be offered in five trim levels: Pro, Pro+, Pulse, Summit Edition and Premium. Battery sizes, depending on trim level, range from 76kWh to 100kWh, with as much as 366 miles offered in its most efficient form. Top recharge speeds of 400kW yield a 10-80% fill in 18 minutes.

The Summit Edition is notable for bringing a variety of off-roading addenda inspired by the #5 concept, with four-wheel drive, a roof rack and a ladder mounted on the right-hand side of its body. It also gets five off-road driving modes, including settings for snow and mud.



Leaked image of the T-Roc shows its new front-end design

Shakedown tests are preparing it for a debut later this year

New bodywork is underpinned by the MQB Evo platform

Summit Edition gains off-roading kit, such as a ladder and roof rack

Golf GTI Clubsport is expected to form the basis of the special GTI

SPECIAL GOLF GTI IN PIPELINE TO MARK 50TH ANNIVERSARY

VOLKSWAGEN WILL UNVEIL a celebratory Golf GTI model at the Nürburgring 24 Hours race in June to mark 50 years of the genre-defining hot hatchback.

Full details remain under wraps but the GTI special is expected to be based on the recently updated Golf GTI Clubsport, featuring unique badging and styling touches that pay tribute to its heritage.

It isn't yet known whether Volkswagen will introduce any power upgrades. The standard Clubsport offers 330bhp from a turbocharged 2.0-litre four-cylinder petrol engine and sends its power to the front wheels via a seven-speed dual-clutch gearbox.

By contrast, the first Golf GTI, launched in 1975, offered just 109bhp – modest by today's standards. Instead, the car got its verve from its low 810kg kerb weight, which helped it to hit 62mph from rest in 10.0sec.

As with that original, the 50th-anniversary model is expected to feature classic GTI design elements, including tartan upholstery and red interior accents.

WILDEST GOLF GTI SPECIALS EVER

MK7.5 CLUBSPORT S

It took the front-wheel-drive lap record at the Nürburgring Nordschleife by ditching the rear seats and having its engine boosted to 306bhp.

MK5 W12-650

A Bentley engine mounted amidships turned this family hatch into a brutal supercar. It was capable of dispatching 0-60mph in less than 4.0sec.

MK5 EDITION 30

The Golf GTI's 30th-anniversary special brought an extra 30bhp, styling tweaks to the body and fresh details inside, including a golf-ball gearknob.

MK3 A59 RALLYE

This rally-bred concept from 1993 never made it to production, but its four-wheel-drive configuration previewed R's arrival 15 years later.

CITROEN TARGETS MORE NEW ICON CARS LIKE REBORN 2CV

Line-up of four core models will be joined by heritage-inspired new cars

Citroën will leverage the history and heritage of the brand – and the 2CV in particular – with future models, according to boss Thierry Koskas, who has also promised that more concepts are on the horizon.

Autocar revealed earlier this year that design work on a model inspired by the original 2CV had begun.

Asked if Citroën makes enough of its heritage, Koskas said the brand has "one of the richest histories in the world" and in France the original Citroën DS and Citroën 2CV are always named as one and two when people are asked for their favourite cars from the past.

"The brand has an incredible history and I think it still appeals to a lot of people," said Koskas. "When you travel everywhere in the world, people know the 2CV.

"We want to use this heritage. We will do it in a way that we will see [in the future]. But yes, we want to leverage that."

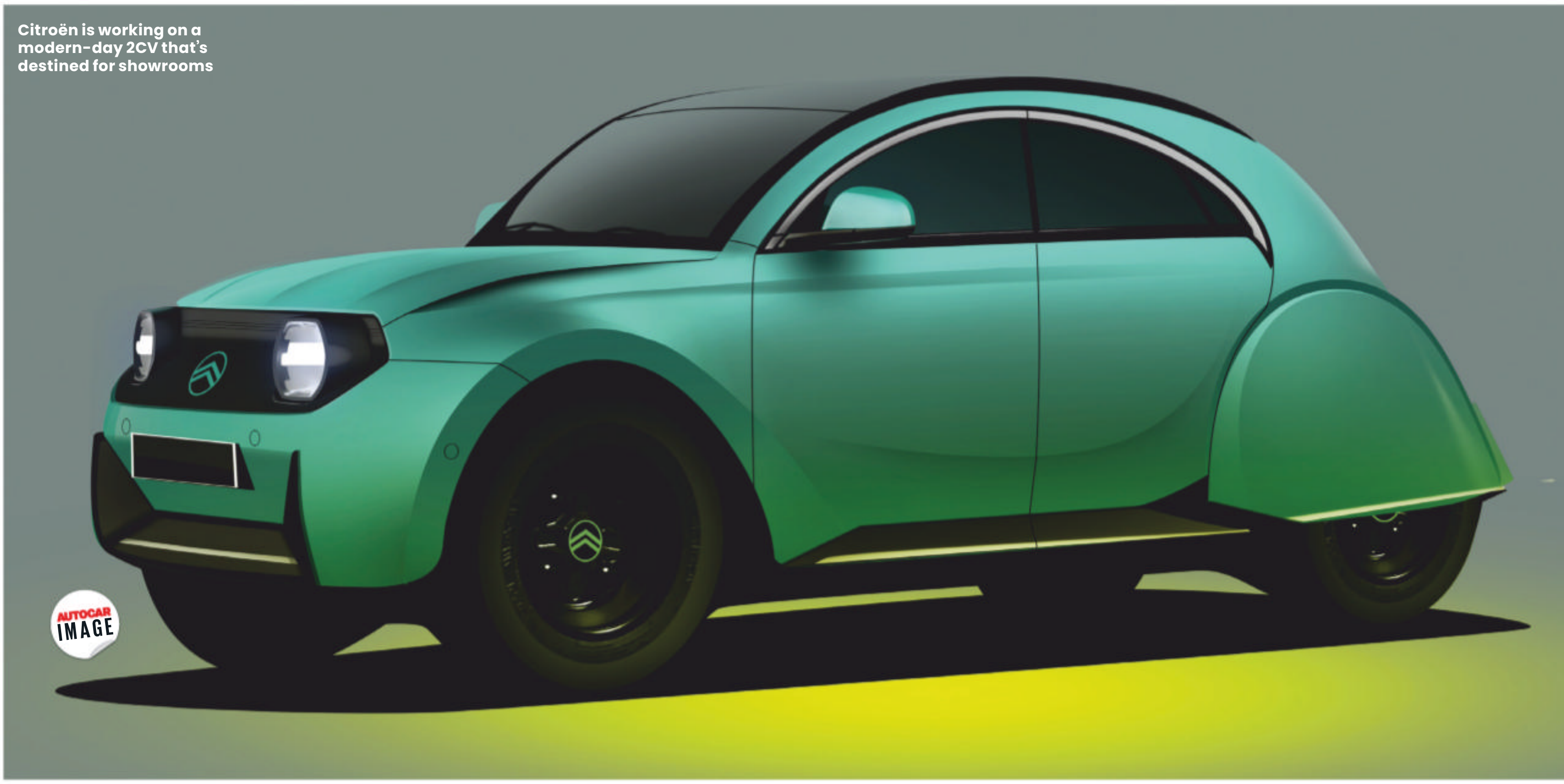
Koskas said the future Citroën range will be built around four pillars: the C3, C3 Aircross, C4 and C5 Aircross. But the firm will launch additional models as part of a plan to be "daring and shocking".

"There are different ways to express that, through our products and how we communicate," he said. "We have started to be daring again in how we communicate.

"But in the future, we need some iconic models that will surprise, either through their design, their features, or whatever. This is very much what Citroën knows how to do and I think that we really need to do that again as it will have a halo effect on the other models.

"We need the four pillars for the volume and growth of the brand, but we also need some icons."

Koskas confirmed that the brand will continue to make physical concept cars to showcase proposed new models and ideas, and later this year there



Citroën is working on a modern-day 2CV that's destined for showrooms

BENTLEY UNFAZED BY 37% ANNUAL FALL IN PROFITS

Bentley's return on sales was still a punchy 14.1%, aided by its Mulliner arm

BENTLEY'S PROFITS DIPPED 37% last year to £314 million, but new CEO Frank-Steffen Walliser described the results as "positive" as the firm ramped up investment in new products and its factory to prepare for a significant increase in its electrified line-up.

Bentley, which sits alongside Audi as a business unit within the Volkswagen Group, posted revenues of £2.2 billion in 2024, a dip of 10% on 2023. It blamed global economic challenges, increased costs, the renewal of three of its four model lines and investment at Crewe – including a new paint shop, a new quality centre and a new production line for EVs – for impacted profits.

As a result, the £314m profit was down on £495m in 2023 and the record £595m that Bentley achieved in 2022. However, the result still marked the fourth-best year in the firm's 105-year history and a fourth straight year of profit.

Bentley's performance was aided by a return on

Koskas wants to leverage the brand's "incredible history"

will be a "new concept that will give direction on how we understand the notion of comfort and space management".

While this is understood to not directly preview a new model, including a reborn 2CV, Koskas said Citroën "needs to move to series cars" for creating new concepts and ideas as "we do not want to have icons only in concepts that nobody will buy. We want to have real icons that customers will buy."

After the imminent introduction of the new C3 and C3 Aircross models and a facelift for the C4, the C5 Aircross will be launched later this year as the last of Citroën's four pillar models.

Koskas said this will be the ceiling for the brand in terms of the size of cars it offers. There is also still no plan for Citroën to re-enter the city car segment with a C1 or C2 model due to "very challenging" issues about making such cars affordable. But Koskas believes Citroën "already addresses the smaller car segment" with the affordability of its new C3.

"We have no intention to go any smaller," he said. "I'm quite happy to be focused on the B- and C-segment. This is my playground."

MARK TISSHAW

Production version of C5 Aircross concept will be a core new model

CITROEN TEES UP £15K ELECTRIC VAN

Citroën hopes to spark a revival of the small-car-based van segment by launching a £15,000 ë-C3 electric van.

The commercial variant of its new entry-level electric car is due in April, with a likely starting price of £15,035 excluding VAT but inclusive of the UK's plug-in van grant.

It will be built to N1 classification and is expected to include an eight-year warranty scheme that is currently being finalised.

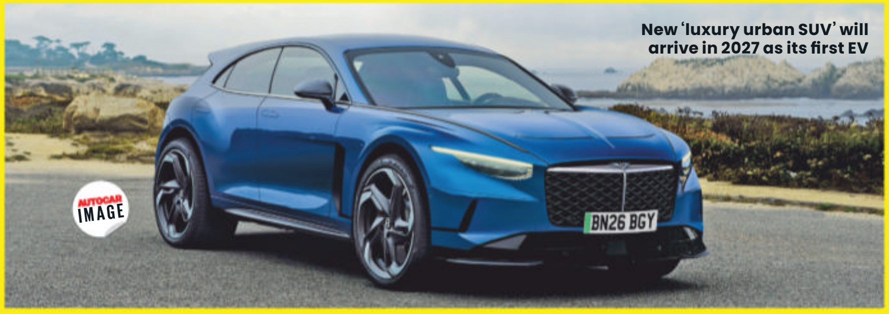
Only the Dacia Spring Cargo will be cheaper, at £14,995 (excluding VAT), although the ë-C3 van will have a longer range.

It will be based on the larger-battery (44kWh) version of the ë-C3, with 200 miles of range and charging speeds of up to 100kW. Power will come from a 111bhp motor.

The ë-C3 van is expected to be used primarily for last-mile deliveries and short-distance journeys.

Citroën UK boss Greg Taylor told Autocar that the brand "can see a niche" for the appeal of such a model. "Ford used to sell thousands of Fiesta vans," he said. "Part of our goal is to reinvigorate that segment."

New electric van will be based on the ë-C3 and have a 200-mile range


New 'luxury urban SUV' will arrive in 2027 as its first EV

sales of 14.1% – one of the strongest in the industry. Around 70% of Bentleys sold went through its bespoke Mulliner division.

The British manufacturer is gearing up to launch its first full EV, described as a 'luxury urban SUV', in 2027 and it will launch at least one new hybrid or EV every year for the next decade, with the goal of becoming electric-only by 2035.

That SUV will be built at Crewe on a new state-of-the-art assembly line. Walliser said the new production line will be "fully flexible" with "no technical restriction" that would prevent ICE cars being built on the line if the firm required it.

Next big thing

JESSE CROSSE

EQS is trialling battery tech from Mercedes AMG HPP

F1 BOFFINS ARE REWRITING THE EV BATTERY RULE BOOK

WHEN MARIO ILLIEN and the late Paul Morgan founded Ilmor Engineering in 1983, neither could have dreamed what part of their company would be doing 40 years later. Based at Brixworth, the firm was formed to develop methanol-fuel Indycar engines but soon branched into Formula 1 and eventually sold its F1 division to Mercedes-Benz. Today, as Mercedes AMG High Performance Powertrains (HPP), it's playing a major part in developing what could be the most advanced EV battery yet.

Solid-state batteries have been on the radar for years now, but we're still waiting. So news that Mercedes began road testing a new battery earlier this month in an EQS using cells from US-based Factorial Energy is significant – not least because it tackles a key drawback associated with these high-capacity lithium batteries by using a new patented technology.

The earliest prototype lithium battery developed by British chemist M Stanley Whittingham had metal anodes made from a blend of lithium and aluminium rather than the graphite used today. The design proved unstable and manufacturing too complex for production, but the thinking was spot on.

Lithium metal has the highest energy capacity of any anode material and has the potential for batteries with correspondingly higher energy density, delivering longer range than existing production EV batteries. But there are two problems.

The first is that lithium metal anodes produce tentacle-like dendrites, which eventually travel through the liquid electrolyte of a conventional lithium ion battery, touching the cathode and destroying the battery. Solid-state batteries prevent this by using a solid electrolyte.

The second problem is that the volume of cells containing lithium anodes increases and decreases during charging and discharging, which causes a mechanical problem in a tightly packed battery.

HPP has come up with a hydraulically actuated 'floating' cell carrier so the cells can swell and contract without damage. It represents a major step in being the first time a battery with lithium metal anodes has been successfully used in a production car.

Will it be the most advanced EV battery? The numbers suggest so. The EQS is targeted to achieve 620 miles, around 25% more range, using a battery of the same weight and dimensions as the standard EQS battery. Its cells are based on the maker's Factorial Electrolyte System Technology (Fest), which it describes as "quasi-solid electrolyte technology".

Its sulphide-based tech, called Solstice, has an all-solid-state electrolyte material that in future trials will raise the range game still further. Fest also has a lithium metal anode giving similar performance and safety advantages to all-solid-state electrolytes mixed with the production ease of conventional lithium ion batteries. Factorial also has deals in place with Stellantis and Hyundai, which bodes well for more affordable cars too.

MG 4 MADE LARGER, SOFTER AND LIGHTER FOR NEXT GEN

Mk2 electric hatch gets Cyberster-esque styling and 135kg less weight

The second-generation MG 4 EV hatchback has been revealed in China, bringing a new look and a significant reduction in weight.

The new 4 has grown to bridge the gap between the existing model and the new S5 crossover (below). It's now 4.4m long, compared with 4.3m before, and the wheelbase has grown by 45mm to 2.75m.

This brings it into competition with the likes of the Citroën ë-C4 and Kia Niro EV. It was previously a closer match for EVs such as the Volvo EX30.

The new 4's softer styling draws heavily on that of the S5, Cyberster sports car and 3 supermini, with thin lights up front and arrow-shaped brake lights at the rear.

> **"Its single rear-mounted motor makes 161bhp"**

MG has yet to reveal the car's interior, or technical details, but it's expected to follow the S5 in those regards, being based on the same underpinnings.

Filings with Chinese authorities state that the 4 has a single rear-mounted motor making 161bhp (down from 168bhp) and weighs 1485kg – a marked reduction from the current 49kWh car's 1620kg.

Energy is drawn from a lithium-iron-phosphate

Pronounced creases of the original 4 have been smoothed away

MG'S NEW 300-MILE ELECTRIC SUV UNDERCUTS RIVALS

OFFICIAL PICTURES

S5 is slightly larger than the existing ZS EV and priced from £28,495

THE MG S5 EV has been unveiled as the Chinese car maker's latest electric SUV, targeting the likes of the Hyundai Kona and Skoda Elroq.

It indirectly replaces the MG 5, which was the first EV estate on sale in the UK.

The S5, which has already been launched in China as the ES5, uses the same Modular Scalable Platform (MSP) and rear-drive mechanical layout as the MG 4 hatchback – a car that has been hugely successful for the brand in the UK, with more than 42,000 sold since it was launched here in September 2022.

Prices for the S5 start at £28,495 in SE trim and rise to £33,495 for the Trophy, undercutting all major EV rivals, despite the S5 also offering more standard equipment. Deliveries will begin in April.

The S5's single rear-mounted motor produces 228bhp and 258lb ft of torque, which is good for a class-leading 0-62mph time of 6.3sec.

Two battery sizes are offered for the SE: 49kWh and 64kWh. The Trophy, meanwhile, comes with only the larger pack for a range of 298 miles.

The S5 was designed mostly in the Shanghai styling studio of MG parent company SAIC, with cues that link it obviously to the new 4 (above), 3 supermini and Cyberster roadster.

Its SUV body sits above a floor-level battery that's just 110mm thick – one reason

Bid to raise perceived quality includes softer-touch surfaces and a bigger screen

battery of undisclosed capacity, most likely giving the new 4 a range comparable to the 218 miles offered by the existing entry-level car.

The new 4 is expected to gain a broader range of electric powertrains shortly after launch, no doubt taking its maximum range beyond the current 329 miles.

The new 4 is due to arrive in the UK this summer, with prices likely to rise slightly from the current entry point of £26,995.

CHARLIE MARTIN

OFFICIAL PICTURES

why the S5 can offer good head room yet a relatively low frontal area and a drag coefficient of just 0.27.

Inside, it gets new soft-feel surfaces, higher-quality materials, bigger, clearer screens and a new array of console-mounted physical controls to make minor operations quicker and easier.

MG expects to sell 6000 to 7000 S5s this year and 12,000 to 15,000 in succeeding years, which will help it to meet the UK government's ZEV mandate targets.

It will be further helped by the arrival of a larger new electric SUV in the coming months.

SPY SHOTS

JEEP TO OFFER NEW CHEROKEE AS PETROL OR EV

Jeep is priming its next-generation Cherokee large SUV for launch next year, offering the choice of petrol or electric power.

It is set to have a close relationship with Jeep's flagship Wagoneer S electric SUV, moving onto parent firm Stellantis's STLA Large platform.

The current Cherokee offers up to 510bhp from a 3.0-litre straight six, which it could take into its next generation, while the electric version will probably use the 600bhp dual-motor, four-wheel-drive powertrain from the Wagoneer S.

Spy shots show the Mk6 Cherokee will share several design cues with that car, too, including a sloping roofline, squared-off haunches, rear doors set into the wheel arches and door handles recessed into the body.

Design will take cues from upmarket Wagoneer S EV

GRAZ TO BUILD CHINESE EVs

Austrian contract manufacturer Magna Steyr is to start production of GAC's Aion Y and Xpeng's G6 in June.

The move comes as Chinese manufacturers seek to establish operations in Europe to circumvent increased EU import tariffs on electric cars made in China.

Production will follow a semi-knocked-down process, wherein partially assembled Aion Ys and G6s are imported from China and completed in Graz.

The G6 (pictured) is on sale in the UK now, from £40k.

Grapevine

MARK TISSHAW

Yangwang U9 can rival Ferrari, says BYD – and an SF90 can't dance

JUST FIVE YEARS ago, BYD posted its third straight decline in annual sales. The 530,000 cars it sold in 2018 dropped to 470,000 in 2019 and then to 430,000 in 2020.

Last year, the Chinese company's sales topped 4.2 million to make it the sixth-largest car-making group in the world and the third-best-selling brand.

Its ultimate goal, says executive vice-president Stella Li, is to become the world's biggest car maker.

"Do your maths," she says with a smile after I ask when BYD hopes that will happen.

Li expects BYD's progress in Europe to be slower than in less mature markets, recognising that it needs to "build trust" here and offer a more rounded package by "spending time on residual values and interest rates", as "we need a strong offering and to build a financial infrastructure".

BYD is increasingly making some extraordinary statements, but it typically has the numbers to back them up. It employs 120,000 engineers across 11 research institutes, making on average 45 patents per day, to now total more than 59,000 patents. It's growing everywhere and in every way: model range, dealer network, factory network.

The development time for BYD models is just 18 months – a timeframe that no 'legacy' car maker can get close to, and it doesn't appear to be cutting corners.

One senior aftersales boss at a major dealer group told me their technicians had remarked that BYD cars were better built and of higher quality than any other manufacturer's.

"Dealers are saying their aftersales aren't very busy and warranty claims are very low," adds BYD's UK country manager, Bono Ge.

"We have plenty of cars with Uber [taxi] drivers, and they're the first to find faults, but there are no warranty or quality issues so far."

Could BYD offer a longer warranty than its standard six years? "We don't want to be too aggressive," answers Li.

BYD is targeting success in all areas of the market, including at the very top. With BYD as the mainstream marque, it has created two other brands for export: Yangwang and Denza.

I ask Li if Yangwang has similar positioning to what Jaguar has in mind, but she says "Jaguar is lower than Yangwang" and the BYD brand is "more premium than that... Yangwang is like Ferrari, a hypercar."

She adds that Denza is a Porsche rival, positioned above the likes of Audi.

> **"Jaguar is lower than Yangwang and Denza is above Audi"**

In China, "luxury is being defined by technology", according to Li, so when it creates an electric hypercar that can jump and dance (Google it...), it's seen as the market leader.

"Before, all luxury was imported [to China]. Now the technology revolution has changed that," says Li.

So is Ferrari worried about BYD? "No, I don't think so," she says. Should they be? "It's too early to be a threat to them. They don't need to worry [now]: we're too young. Maybe some day..."

HUMANOID ROBOTS START WORK AT MERCEDES PLANT

Firm expects mobile bots and AI to increase efficiency and save money

Mercedes-Benz is planning the rollout of humanoid robots and new artificial intelligence (AI) software across its European and American production lines to streamline processes, increase efficiency and save money.

Robots from US company Apptronik and AI software from Google DeepMind are currently being tested at Mercedes' Digital Factory Campus in Berlin, Germany.

Unlike familiar industrial robots, which are fixed in place and do repetitive tasks, Apptronik's Apollo humanoid can navigate factory floors and handle a variety of non-repetitive functions to speed up manufacturing processes.

Mercedes is initially deploying Apollo in intra-logistics, moving materials between workstations to support human workers.

It has also confirmed an investment of more than £85 million in Apptronik, signalling a deeper partnership that is expected to expand into other areas of manufacturing automation.

Jörg Burzer, Mercedes' director of production, quality and supply chain management, told Autocar: "We're training [the robots on] tasks away from the workforce. We're thinking hard about how we're going to implement it. It's important to choose the right tasks: repetitive and hazardous."

Mercedes' investment allows it to leverage Apptronik's recently announced partnership with Google DeepMind. This includes two new AI models: Gemini Robotics and Gemini Robotics Extended Reasoning. Both models run on Gemini 2.0, which Google DeepMind describes as its most capable AI model to date, going beyond text and image output into physical action and commands to control robots.

The AI-enhanced automation processes are being deployed in Mercedes' quality control and production monitoring, enabling assistants to analyse production anomalies, detect defects and optimise workflows.

"AI takes over the tasks we enjoy less, giving us time to focus on value-adding activities. It's a huge efficiency gain," said Burzer.

Together with these robotic advancements, Mercedes has updated its digital production system with new AI-driven software tools, including a revised Chatbot Ecosystem.

Although Mercedes has a global manufacturing network, its initial focus for the introduction of AI and humanoid robots is on its European and American factories.

"We don't have plans to introduce it to China," Burzer told Autocar when questioned on the geopolitical implications of adopting the new tech.

Other car makers have made similar moves towards integrating next-generation tech into their manufacturing processes. For instance, in 2023 Autocar visited Hyundai's new AI-run factory in Singapore, which also used robots to undertake many routine tasks, and in 2024 JLR started using a robot dog to check that equipment is working properly at its EV facility in Coventry.

GREG KABLE

MAZDA READIES ALL-NEW PETROL ENGINE

THE NEXT-GENERATION Mazda CX-5 SUV will offer an all-new petrol engine, marking the Japanese firm's latest commitment to offering ICE cars for the foreseeable future.

Mazda said the new unit would be named the Skyactiv-Z, suggesting it will replace the 183bhp Skyactiv-X four-cylinder engine currently offered in the CX-5, CX-30 and 3.

It added that the Z engine will comply with the EU's incoming Euro 7 emissions standards and that it will be paired with a hybrid system in the CX-5.

It will also feature fewer electronic control units (ECUs) and different types of control software to simplify development and production, cutting costs.

The new CX-5 is due to be launched in two years' time.

Meanwhile, Mazda reduced its planned investment in electrification from ¥2 trillion (£10.2 billion) to around ¥1.5tn (£7.7bn).

It said it would scale back its spending on electrical architectures, hybrid systems and battery management and instead rely on partnerships with other manufacturers, such as Toyota and China's Changan.

Hybrid CX-5, due in 2027, will use Mazda's new Skyactiv-Z unit

MY WEEK IN CARS

Steve Cropley

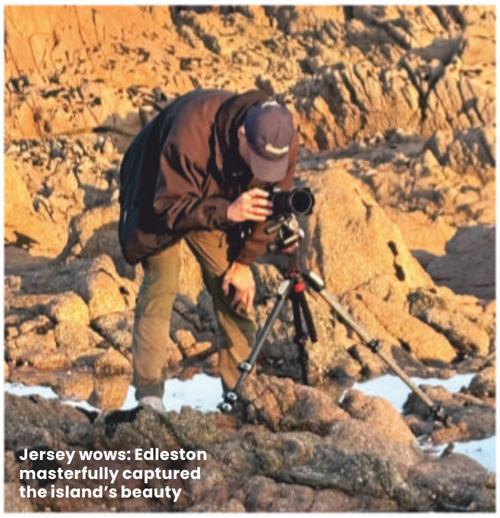
Three stars from Goodwood test day, where the only enemy was time

MONDAY

Rapid and somewhat flustered lunchtime departure from the office to Goodwood, where MG was launching its latest EV, a Nissan Qashqai-sized SUV called the S5 (p14). It was an afternoon event that slipped my mind until the very last minute. I grabbed the nearest car, our Suzuki Swift long-termer (p58), and rushed (legally) down the A3 towards Chichester.

A compact SUV isn't the right car for me or my family these days, but I was impressed with this one on three counts: the way MG has responded to criticism of its cars' interior quality by introducing much better materials; the way it has provided a new row of hard keys under the central touchscreen to make simple functions quicker and less distracting; and the spectacular pricing, which easily undercuts all opposition.

I know critics will say, with some merit, that MG's Chinese parentage gives it a baked-in price advantage, but even without it the S5 EV is a beguiling product.



Jersey wows: Edleston masterfully captured the island's beauty

> “The market may be a mess, but the cars are better than ever”

TUESDAY AM

My original plan, without the MG event, was to get up early and go today to Goodwood's annual Media Driving Day, a chance to try rare, elusive and expensive cars on road and (mainly) track. This year we could get into a Ferrari, a Maserati, a McLaren, a top-end BMW, a Lotus, a Porsche, a Bentley and a Rolls-Royce – before reaching for Fords and Renaults.

I started off with the latest John Cooper Works Mini hatch (quick but not raw, beautifully made, near-perfect for UK conditions), then moved to an MG Cyberster GT dual-motor roadster (fast, handsome but a shade big and bouncy for my taste) and a Lotus Emeya saloon (huge and silent but with beautiful steering, fabulous brakes and near-perfect throttle sensitivity that showed evidence of old-style Hethel refinement). After that, I tried some Fords (decently mainstream) but regrettably couldn't get to the front of the Mustang queue. A few miles in a right-handed Renault 5 made me wish for many more of the same. Bottom line: the market may be a mess, but the cars we're offered are better than ever.

TUESDAY PM

After lunch, I ran into Gordon Murray, who revealed that the central sculpture on His Lordship's lawn this year at the Festival of Speed will commemorate his own 60 years of car design. The installation, designed by the excellent Gerry Judah for the past two dozen years, will this year follow a theme penned by Murray himself, although Judah will still be in charge of finessing, building and erecting.

After Goodwood, Murray plans to move the installation to his eponymous company's new headquarters at Windlesham, Surrey, adding another layer to the history of the place.

WEDNESDAY

Today we publish the outcome of a trip that photographer Max Edleston and I recently made to Jersey. Max loves Jersey, having holidayed there a lot as a kid. It's where he first picked up a camera and contemplated photography as a career. At first, this feature was only going to occupy four pages, but Max decided to do his utmost to persuade Ms Editor Burgess to give it another couple. See how he succeeded from p44.

FRIDAY

Time to give the Swift back to its usual driver – not an easy parting. This little car's super-smooth 1.2-litre turbo petrol engine, with an integrated starter-generator to help when needed, seems too responsive, too flexible and too all-round sophisticated to be a mere economy model. Yet it proved its frugality with an overall consumption of 63mpg even though I drove it as hard as traffic and law would allow. I would recommend one of these to anyone.

AND ANOTHER THING

Bentley topped all Goodwood comers by bringing a Bentayga hooked to a rugged, super-cool, Australian-built mobile HQ, far too special to be called a caravan. Its quad wheels wear off-road tyres and have a foot of suspension travel. The whole shebang costs as much as the car in front, and the grapevine says our Matt Prior is shaping up to test it off road in a few weeks' time.

GET IN TOUCH
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PRIOR CONVICTION

Matt Prior

Too big and heavy, too expensive, too slow to charge. These are all accusations levelled at today's EV batteries, to an extent and on occasions, fairly.

Consider also what's said about Rolls-Royce: that it makes the world's best cars. "Strive for perfection in everything you do," Sir Henry Royce reportedly once said. In the 1920s, Rolls-Royce adverts on these pages were promising that "the unique prestige of the Rolls-Royce cars is based upon perfection of design, superb material, and fine craftsmanship". A century later, you would still recognise those as Rolls-Royce traits.

So it's weird to me that battery technology often called not good enough for lesser uses is somehow more than entirely adequate for some of the world's most expensive and luxurious production cars.

The new Spectre Black Badge (see p24) is a £400,000 super-luxury coupé EV of extremely high performance, and yet the battery technology within it is compromised just like anywhere else. Here, though, it matters less.

So what that batteries are heavy? The V12-engined Ghost weighs two and a half tonnes, so it doesn't matter that the Spectre weighs a few hundred kilos more. It can carry only four people and can't tow anything.

If it can't charge very quickly, that's fine too, because Spectre owners have three-phase charging in at least one of their homes and, on average, 13 other cars. If the 300-mile range isn't enough, they won't hang around a charger in the cold and rain splitting power between their Spectre and an adjacent Nissan Leaf. They will go by helicopter.

Finally, batteries are expensive. Shrug.

If the Spectre Black Badge is a car that does only 2.6 miles per kWh, has pricey electrical bits and charges no faster than a family hatchback, it doesn't matter. It compromises its use not one bit and is 100% fit for a Rolls-Royce.

"I felt safe and relaxed," said Brad, 93, of his ride in an autonomous Leaf

It's fitting the same equipment into, say, a supermini where the problems actually come, just like they would if you were trying to fit one of Rolls-Royce's V12s into a Nissan Micra.

MOBILITY FOR ALL

Nissan has just finished testing autonomous cars on UK roads, as its EvolvAD project has come to a close – the last part of an eight-year scheme.

This bit was to see whether a self-driving Leaf could operate outside of cities and in less connected areas, on residential and single-track country roads, to discover what types of technology will be necessary to drive in such complex environments.

Nissan says the trial has been "tremendously successful", but you may note that there aren't autonomous cars serving your neighbourhood yet. Over eight years, autonomous Leafs have driven 16,000 miles over all kinds of terrain. You may also note that doesn't sound very far.

> **"A Rolls owner won't hang around a charger in the cold and rain"**

Autonomous cars are still a long way away, then. And it's unclear whether they're viable at all and whether we will ever get there. If you've driven a car with any assisted driving technology, you will know how hopeless it can be.

But, but, but. To remind us why it's doing it, last week Nissan put a 93-year-old in one of these cars and had it drive him around to show what it could do. Because while autonomous technology might take the weight off while it drives you to work, more importantly it can also be used to keep mobile the people who need it most – those who can't drive themselves.

People lament losing personal mobility, their ability to drive, because it gets really expensive when they can't, and that's because employing drivers is the expensive bit in any commercial road transport. I have a local bus service that operates limited hours and has to be underwritten by the council for that reason.

So if it costs even, say, £300,000 to equip a vehicle with autonomous driving technology, if the vehicle operates all the time and the technology replaces several drivers, it will pay for itself quickly.

The prospect of self-driving vehicles is bad news for professional drivers. But for people who need to get around, who can't drive, who can't get to a bus and who can't afford taxis, it could make the difference between staying in a home or community they love or being carted off to a home less dignified.

It can make independence more affordable, more viable. And for that reason, it's worth seeing if it will work.

GET IN TOUCH
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Rolls-Royce is able to make common EV complaints disappear

RACING LINES

Damien Smith

Porsche pair were kept honest by their Acura and Cadillac rivals at Sebring

What a start to the year for Porsche's Penske-run 963 hypercars in the US. Seven weeks after Felipe Nasr, Nick Tandy and Laurens Vanthoor sealed victory at the Daytona 24 Hours, the same trio pulled a famous double by scooping the 73rd Sebring 12 Hours. As Tandy put it: "Winning the 36 Hours of Florida in Daytona and Sebring is hard to believe."

Porsche found itself deep in the shadow of old rival Ferrari in the World Endurance Championship opener in Qatar earlier this month, but its form in the IMSA Sportscar Championship has left it with a commanding lead over BMW, Cadillac and Acura.

This was a record-extending 19th overall victory at Sebring for Porsche but the brand's first since 2008, and it increased the winning trio's points lead to a healthy 91 over the sister 963 crew of Matt Campbell, Mathieu Jaminet and Kévin Estre, who made it a one-two in the older of the two Florida endurance classics.

New historical landmarks are cropping up left, right and centre at the moment.

TRIPLE CROWN FOR TANDY

Tandy's racing life at the age of 40 couldn't be much brighter. His Daytona success marked him out as the first driver to claim overall wins at all four of the world's major 24-hour races, added to his past honours for Porsche at Le Mans, Spa-Francorchamps and the Nürburgring, and hitting the top at Sebring made him the 10th to achieve sports car racing's unofficial Triple Crown of Le Mans, Daytona and Sebring. Those three 'majors' count for more than any title.

Tandy was already highly regarded, but his victories in the past two months have sealed his place among the most decorated endurance racers. For me, he's up there with Britain's past greats. Derek Bell won Le Mans five times, Daytona on three occasions and was World Sports Car Champion twice yet somehow never won at Sebring (he finished second four times and third twice). Allan McNish won Le Mans three times, Sebring four times, claimed a trio of American Le Mans Series titles and added a WEC crown in his final racing season in 2013 but didn't manage a victory at Daytona (although he made only a few starts there, because it confusingly wasn't part of the old American Le Mans Series).

> "New landmarks are popping up left, right and centre at present"

Tandy will be hungry in particular to add another Le Mans win to the one he achieved in Porsche's 919 LMP1 prototype in 2015, and who's to say he won't manage it come June this year? A hat-trick of all three majors in the same season would probably blow his mind.

HOW THE RACE WAS WON

As in Daytona, BMW took pole position only to once again find itself undone by its great German rival. The key at Sebring is to stay in contention in the intense heat of the day, then push on after the sun sets as the race runs to a finish in darkness – and the 963 just got quicker as the race progressed.

Tandy couldn't hide his delight after making motorsport history

Nasr led briefly in the opening hour, but it was Tandy who pulled the crucial pass on Frederik Vesti's Cadillac V-Series R later in the race. Ever-dependable Nasr, who is also building his own impressive roster of IMSA achievements, then brought it home just 2.239sec ahead of the sister 963, whose drivers couldn't hide their deflation at missing out on the victory.

"You rarely see a sports team or operation that does a single event without any faults or mistakes, and we've just celebrated with 40 people who have flawlessly run a car for 36 hours at Daytona and Sebring combined," said Tandy.

"The Triple Crown is probably one of the more historic accomplishments or accolades. I never realised how big a thing it would be winning all the four 24 Hours. It went global and my team-mates are tired of hearing about it, but I'm not! And now this is another unbelievable thing."

ANOTHER BITE FOR PORSCHE

The Porsche cup of joy overflowed at Sebring as AO Racing's 911 GT3 R – known to fans as 'Rexy' for its signature toothy livery – secured the GTD Pro class win. Again, there was pain for BMW as Paul Miller Racing's M4 GT3 Evos were beaten over the final stint, with Laurin Heinrich taking the chequered flag less than 5.0sec ahead.

Racing is always close over the bumps of the old airfield course, and 12 hours from day into night is considered at least as tough as 24 hours at Daytona or Le Mans.

All three races carry the weight of hefty history, and while Le Mans will always stand out as the Big One, Porsche will cherish its Sebring record.

YOUR VIEWS

WRITE TO autocar@haymarket.com

IF WONKA MADE CARS

I was interested in Kris Culmer's retrospective about Franco Sbarro and his amazing cars (Lost in the archive, 5 February).

My interest in Sbarro goes back many years and several visits to his workshop and 'hall d'exposition'. His fresh approach to car design was completely different from many others in the field.

I recall a Volkswagen Golf with a hinged floor that gained access to a Porsche Turbo engine and a replica Bugatti Royale with two Rover 3.5 engines in tandem replicating the 16 cylinders of the original. He also specialised in other replicas: BMW 328, Mercedes-Benz 540K, Ford GT40, Lola T70 and Ferrari P4.

The 1977 Function Car, based on a Cadillac Eldorado 8.2 FWD, complete with lounge and living areas, was at one point bought by a musician who proposed to have a piano installed under its extended high roof for a European tour.

About a dozen Mercedes-Benz 500 SECs with gull-winged doors were built, each varying according to the customer's requirements.

Without doubt Sbarro's most sensational engineering was the hubless wheel, originally on the Orbital Hybrid concept car and later on a Jaguar V12-engined super-coupé and motorcycles.

What other manufacturer has offered such a wide range of cars?

Peter Saunders
Bristol

NOTHING BEATS IT

It was great to read Felix Page's thoughts on my car, a Mini Cooper S Sport (Living with a…, 19 February).

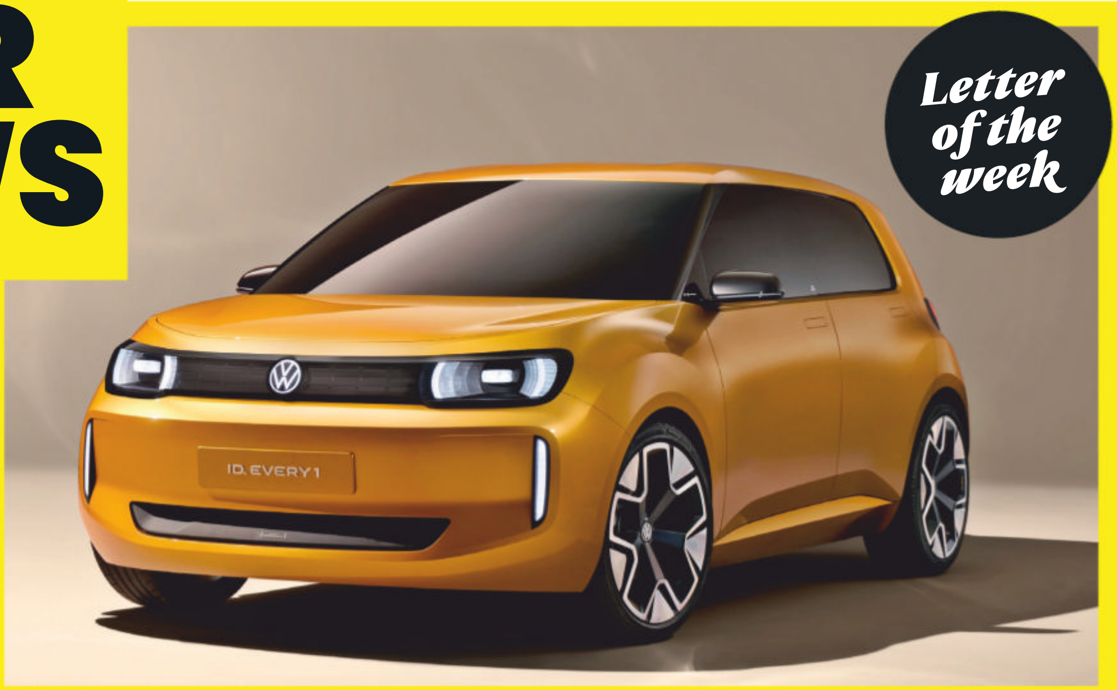
Originally I planned to get a new Mini Countryman JCW. In fact, I actually ordered one and cancelled it on the day I was due to collect it. I absolutely hated it in every way: the size, the look… It simply didn't have the same feel as the outgoing model that I was moving from.

So I opted for a Cooper S Sport instead. It's brilliant in every way. It's practical and extremely fun to drive, so I can totally understand why Felix looked out of his study window on that bleak midwinter day and got excited about his trip up to Solihull. I share his enthusiasm.

I also agree that this car has no real competitors. I'm not sure Minis have competitors anyway; they really are in a class of their own. Probably always have been.

Ian Tennant
Via email

GETTY IMAGES



Letter of the week

EVER INCREASING CIRCLES

I can't understand how the global car market has conditioned our eyes and brains to become so conditioned to accepting larger and larger wheels and tyres on ever-smaller cars. Though they are heavier, I'm sure most EVs never come close to needing the huge load capacity these 19-23in-diameter monstrosities offer. Your article on the Volkswagen ID Every1 concept (News, 12 March) finally drove me to write in.

Having spent years in and around styling studios, I think we can lay the blame firmly at the door of car designers, product planners and marketeers.

Where to start on a list of negatives? Here goes… The larger 'wheel boxes' required eat into interior space, the lower tyre profiles ruin the secondary ride and make the wheel assemblies more vulnerable to kerbs and potholes, efficiency is worsened (because drag and rotational inertia are increased), the replacement costs of both a worn or damaged tyre and any cracked rim are higher… I could go on.

We were always happy to see 1960s performance Fords on 13x5.5in rims. In fact, the Mk1 Lotus Cortina and Escort Mexico shod in this way still look proportionally good today.

So come on, you motor noters: stop drooling over these unnecessary 'styling features'. You're only encouraging the manufacturers in this regard. Or are you in cahoots with the tyre replacement industry?

Peter Morris, Worcestershire

Given it's just a concept, the ID Every1's wheels may shrink when it goes into production (we hope) – KC

UPS AND DOWNS

I like the idea of a compact boxy EV, but Volkswagen's ID Every1 design is missing something. The original Up was a superb design and still looks good today, more than 13 years after it was launched. This concept doesn't have the same classlessness of the Up. And the range is concerning too. Hopefully battery technology will improve.

Will
Via autocar.co.uk

Sbarro: a master of versatility in vehicle design

Choosing between these two Minis was a no-brainer for Ian

You're onto a winner with a Japanese Legacy, promises Martin

VANILLA VW

The ID Every1's design is very bland and uninspiring. It needs a few retro touches and a bit more imagination on the outside and inside. Rivals such as the Fiat Grande Panda and Renault 5 are far more funky and have a modern retro appeal and a USP. This doesn't have that yet.

'The Kurgan'
Via autocar.co.uk

SMALL MERCIES

What is the distance of the average journey undertaken by car? Way less than 155 miles. The ID Every1's range will be fine. We should be embracing smaller EVs, instead of gormlessly clapping like seals every time someone unveils another four-ton mega-behemoth. This car looks neat. I like it.

Graham Mills
Via Facebook

LUCID THINKING

Lucid's Peter Rawlinson, interviewed in your 5 March issue, was spot on in his views on EVs and making them efficient. But until lawmakers start taxing based on the efficiency of an EV and not

just having an EV, there's no incentive for manufacturers or customers to really take an interest in efficiency, sadly.
'Harf'
Via autocar.co.uk

OUR OWN WORST ENEMY

If everyone stopped wanting huge, lumbering monstrosities for cars, we could make progress. But nobody wants energy-efficient cars; they want huge, big and inefficient. Simple physics dictates what we get. Yet we still want a three-tonne SUV that does 800 miles on a charge…
Mark Collins
Via Facebook

IT CUTS BOTH WAYS

Like many a car buyer, I suspect that I was once a beneficiary of the Employee Car Ownership Scheme (News, 12 March), as direct from a dealer I bought a low-mileage, six-month-old BMW.

The benefits of ECOS, including the elimination of benefit-in-kind tax and national insurance contributions, are seen as part of an employee's pay package, which this government believes is neither legitimate nor fair on other workers.

I agree with the government's interpretation but hope that the abolition of ECOS doesn't lead to a lack of low-mileage, nearly new cars for those of us who are unable to fund the increasingly exorbitant cost of ex-showroom new cars.

'The catch' as described by one ECOS user won't be favourably met by those outside the car industry who receive no similar benefits. If those minor hiccups are a catch, I suspect most Autocar readers would be happy to agree to them.
Roger Tagg
Farnsfield, Nottinghamshire

TOKYO THRIFT

The Subaru Legacy GT-B is a great car ('Enduring Legacy', 5 February). Forged pistons rattling on start-up and so damn fast. Block a vacuum pipe to get more boost on the primary. Later JDM twin-scroll models are great all-rounders. Parts are the same as on many other Subies and easy to get via Import Car Parts. VED is cheap for the year compared with a UK car, too.

Many friends have gone German and suffer all the issues. My 2006 JDM car has been trouble-free since it was imported in 2017.
Martin Brawn
Via autocar.co.uk

Weekly winner

Letter of the week wins this ValetPro exterior protection and maintenance kit worth £48

GREAT REASONS TO BUY

Next week's issue

ON SALE 2 APRIL

FIRST DRIVE

DACIA BIGSTER

Is this budget Defender rival another hit for its maker or a step too far?

FEATURE

WHAT NEXT FOR JEEP IN THE UK?

We find out on a byway drive with Jeep UK boss Kris Cholmondeley

INSIGHT

CHARGE QUBE

FROM BATMOBILE TO INNOVATIVE EV CHARGERS

How one man went from supplying power for Glastonbury and the Olympics, via crazy film and TV cars, to a clever EV charging solution

EVERY WEEK

USED GUIDE

LAND ROVER DISCOVERY SPORT

Slick, compact 4x4 now costs just £6k. Here's what to watch out for

LIVING WITH A…

FORD EXPLORER

Harbinger of future Fords – a Volkswagen-based electric crossover – joins our fleet

CONTENTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

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FIRST DRIVES

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HOW WE TEST CARS

Autocar delivers several kinds of reviews on new cars, with different levels of technical and functional scrutiny. As the name suggests, our First Drives section typically addresses cars that we're driving for the first time – either in final production form or as late prototypes. Time in the car can be limited here, technical and equipment specification might not be finalised and some systems software may not be to production spec. For those reasons, First Drive reports don't have star ratings.

Once we have driven a car for a second time in the UK, in right-hand-drive form and typically at greater length, we will rate it, either as part of a shorter UK test report or as the subject of a full, instrumented Road Test.

In the latter case, we take empirical performance and refinement benchmarks from it at Horiba MIRA proving ground, as well as subjective limit handling impressions, plus key measurements of practicality, efficiency and kerb weight.

All UK tests and Road Tests receive proper verdicts with star ratings informed by everything we have learned and the combined impressions and experience of several testers.

TESTED 12.3.25, BARCELONA, SPAIN **DELIVERIES** SUMMER

ROLLS-ROYCE SPECTRE BLACK BADGE

'Subversive' electric coupé is most powerful Rolls yet

It wasn't until BMW took on Rolls-Royce that the latter deigned to share how much power its engines made. Right up to the late 1990s, it told that us its cars had "adequate" power and left it at that.

If you would like just one example of how far it has moved since then, note that it isn't only declaring that the new Black Badge variant of the Spectre electric coupé is "the most powerful Rolls-Royce in history", owing to its 650bhp, but that during the launch of this car, its accelerative capabilities were demonstrated on a race track.

Nonetheless, the Black Badge is still, we're assured by CEO Chris Brownridge, "a true Rolls-Royce". It's just that a new set of customers have come to the brand lately, wanting their Rollers to be a bit more "subversive", choosing themes that are "darker or more vibrant" than is traditional.

Goodwood initially made that possible through bespoke programmes, then made Black Badge a part of its regular range.

This meaner Spectre was in the plan from the start, then, but still 25 early 'clandestine' ones were made with the technical package so that some customers could test them under the radar ahead of launch and report back. Not necessary, one would think, but you can imagine it feels quite special to be asked. "They had a car that didn't exist for six months," as Brownridge puts it.

Selling 5000-6000 cars a year and with no particular ambition to increase that, Rolls-Royce is basically in the business of making customers feel special.

Here we are now with the Spectre Black Badge in production form. The changes are partly visual, partly engineered. The visible ones are a new wheel design, the 'dark chrome' exterior aesthetic, illuminated kickplates and

Carbonfibre trim hints at move away from traditional luxury

"The body control feels tighter yet the ride is still entirely absorbent"

It's 'more vibrant' but still whisper-quiet inside; Black Badge brings thicker rim

TESTER'S NOTE

Rear-hinged doors are heavy. Hold the handle in the open position and it will gently pull you out of the car. **MP**

carbonfibre trim. A new violet paint colour redolent of '80s and '90s nightclub culture can feature too, although, this being a Rolls-Royce, you can basically have what elements you want and virtually anything else besides.

The engineering changes are partly software, partly hardware. Although the increased power is the headline-grabber, the car starts in a conventional drive mode, with 577bhp as per the standard Spectre; thumbing a steering wheel button marked with the infinity symbol opens up the additional 73bhp.

With Infinity mode selected, standing on the brake and throttle pedals when stationary induces a gentle shimmy into the motors, shaking the body to let you know that Spirited mode – or launch control by any other name – is engaged, which gives 793lb ft of torque and a 0-62mph time of 4.1sec (instead of 4.5sec).

More notable more often is that Infinity mode also weights up the steering slightly and sharpens the throttle response, although it's still not like the response of, say, a fast Tesla or a Porsche Taycan. Rolls-Royces, not even Spectres, aren't made for whip-crack EV responses, and this is still a 5.5m-long, 2.9-tonne, super-luxury coupé. So when you give it full throttle on the straight of a track, acceleration comes like a lightly laden airliner gathering speed. It's totally on-brand: this is how a V12 engine would like to feel.

But Spectres, even Black Badge ones, will live on the road, and the ride and handling remains on-message here too. The body control feels tighter, and yet I'd challenge anyone to say it doesn't ride well enough. It's entirely absorbent. Some slackness of body movements that I remember at middling speeds, 40-60mph, on undulating roads, don't seem present. But despite some hardware changes to reduce pitch, this is still a car allowed to move around luxuriously, not over-loosely.

It's also very quiet, perhaps obviously, unless you're playing with the fake sounds, which whooshily accompany acceleration until they get tiresome and you turn them off. Thereafter hands sliding on the steering wheel are usually the loudest thing inside (chauffeurs train to feed the wheel between fingers for this reason).

The interior is opulent – and when carbonfibre is specced, it's because of how Rolls-Royce makes the weave look, rather than any pretence at weight reduction. The steering wheel's rim is made 3mm thicker to give a slightly beefier feel.

With big, flat seats and the finest materials you will find in any new car around you, a high window line, a bonnet that stretches for miles and the footprint of most double-cab pick-ups, it feels odd to describe the Spectre, like any other Rolls-Royce, as a driver's car, but I do find them enjoyable to drive: the pedal weightings are right for stopping and starting gently, and the steering is delicately accurate and responsive. This one will go a bit faster and more controlled than the standard Spectre, but everything likeable about that car remains likeable here.

MATT PRIOR

TECH SPEC

ROLLS-ROYCE SPECTRE BLACK BADGE

Black Badge adds a little bit of edge, some extra pace and around 20% extra cost to Rolls' EV while giving very little away

Price £400,000 (est)
Engine Two separately excited synchronous motors
Power 650bhp
Torque 793lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, 4WD
Kerb weight 2890kg
0-62mph 4.1sec
Top speed 155mph
Battery 102kWh (usable)
Range, economy 306-329 miles, 2.6-2.8mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 2%
Rivals Maserati Granturismo Folgore, Bentley Continental GT Speed, Aston Martin Vanquish

TESTED 18.3.25, OXFORDSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

BMW M2

Uprated engine and fettled chassis for facelifted junior performance car

When the second-generation M2 was launched, it couldn't escape comparison with the preceding M2 Competition, and sure enough it wasn't quite as compact, thuggish or lovable.

Only two years on, it's getting a model-year update to bring it in line with the rest of the lower half of BMW's range. Munich is on a big renewal spree: Series 1 through 4 and the X3 have all been updated in the past year. Some are quite substantial, as with the 2 Series Gran Coupé on p30, but you would be forgiven for not noticing the changes to the 2 Series Coupé, on which the M2 is based.

As a reminder, despite sharing most of their model name, those two coupés are mechanically very different. While the four-door is front-wheel drive, the two-door is effectively a shortened 4 Series, making it rear-wheel drive (or four-wheel drive in the case of the M240i xDrive), making a proper M version possible.

The exterior changes are minor in the extreme. The standard 2 Series Coupé gets some new alloy wheel designs, while the M2 stays pretty much the same. There are some new paint colours, such as the Fire Red of our test car, and you can now spec silver wheels, which BMW's press office didn't.

There have been some actual changes inside, where you will find a redesigned steering wheel. BMW was one of the last holdouts against flat-bottomed steering wheels but has finally caved – and it has taken the opportunity to get rid of the

A 20bhp bump shaves 0.1sec off the 0-62mph time

"The front feels a bit keener now, and accordingly it's easier to get the rear to move around on the power" button for the rim heating.

The big, curved dashboard screen runs a new version of BMW's iDrive software, which has a few more shortcut icons than before. Because the one in the M2 is M-specific, it's slightly different from what you will find in the new X3. The on-screen menus are simpler and therefore easier to use.

This M2 also retains a few more physical buttons, and that makes all the difference. You're able to get rid of all the annoying assistance systems using the 'M mode' button, you can dial up customised drive modes using the Shrek ears marked 'M1' and 'M2' on the steering wheel and the rotary controller has much better haptics than the one in the X3, which makes it easier to use without having to look down. You even get a dial to change the screen brightness.

I would buy an M car instead of a regular BMW just for the improved usability, but of course there are more important reasons to buy the M2, not least the powertrain, which has received a 20bhp boost, from 453bhp to 473bhp, peaking at the same 6250rpm.

BMW doesn't say how that extra power was liberated, but the same engine makes 523bhp in the M3, so presumably it has just fiddled around with the software. Peak torque remains the same at 406lb ft (or 443lb ft if you choose the automatic), albeit over a slightly wider spread of revs.

I don't love this engine and I reckon the standard 3.0-litre turbo unit in the M240i sounds more characterful. It's quite a gruff-sounding thing but not as loud as the V6 in the Alfa Romeo Giulia Quadrifoglio, let alone as layered and interesting as the turbo-less sixes in the Porsche 718 Cayman GTS 4.0 and Lotus Emira.

But a responsive straight six allied to a manual gearbox remains a thing of joy – and something no one else offers any more. Said manual actually carries a price premium over the eight-speed automatic, due to the vagaries of road tax. But it's worth having if you like rowing your own gears. It's still the classic BMW manual gearchange: short, quick and precise but quite notchy and rubbery. Some people like it, some don't.

More intriguing are the chassis changes. BMW doesn't mention any in its literature, but both road test editor Matt Saunders and I reckon it feels subtly different from before.

The suspension feels firmer, which tallies with what we've found with the other updated BMWs we've driven recently. However, the M-spec damping is of a higher calibre than those standard-series cars, and it never feels like the wheels are going to lose contact with the road. Indeed, the M2 is more settled and comfortable than the 220 Gran Coupé.

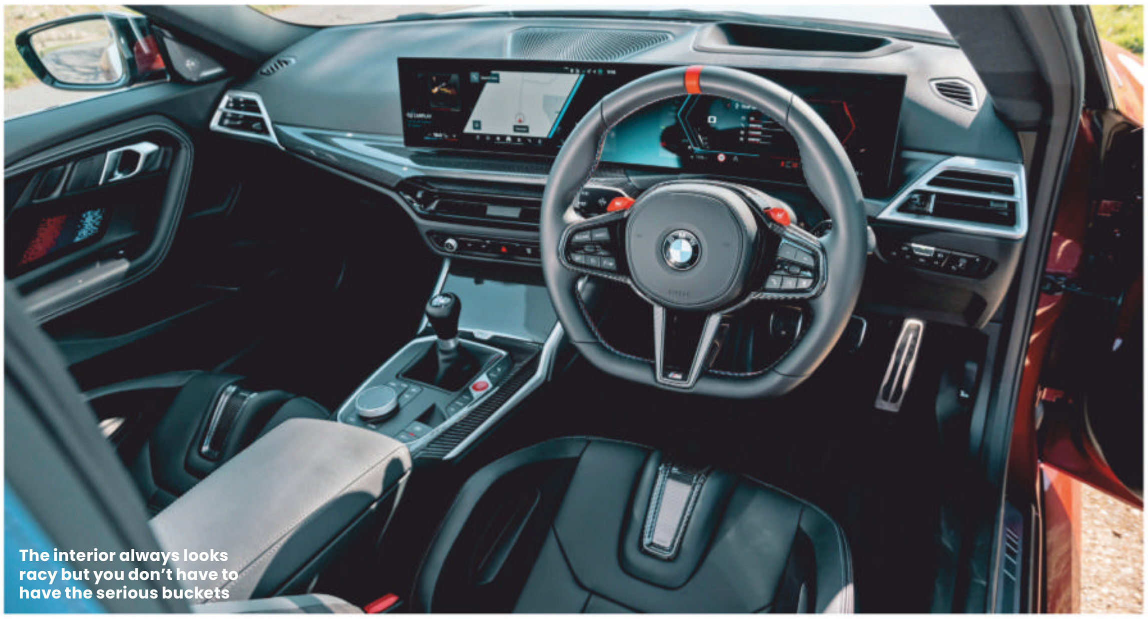
The M2's front end also feels a bit keener than before, and accordingly it's easier to get the rear end to move around on the power. In short, it's closer to the near-500bhp, rear-driven sports car I expect it to be.

The traction and stability control remains a highlight, letting you experiment with the balance while the M Dynamic mode or variable traction control keep an eye out.

When you think about the class the M2 is operating in, it's still quite busy and competitive – surprisingly so, perhaps. The M2 remains a compelling choice and maybe slightly more so than when it was launched. The mid-engined 718 Cayman and Emira are purer and more exciting but less practical, while the Ford Mustang GT and Mercedes-AMG CLE 53 Coupé lack the M2's final degrees of sharpness.

Two years on from its launch, with comparisons with its predecessor fading, it's all the clearer just how good it is.

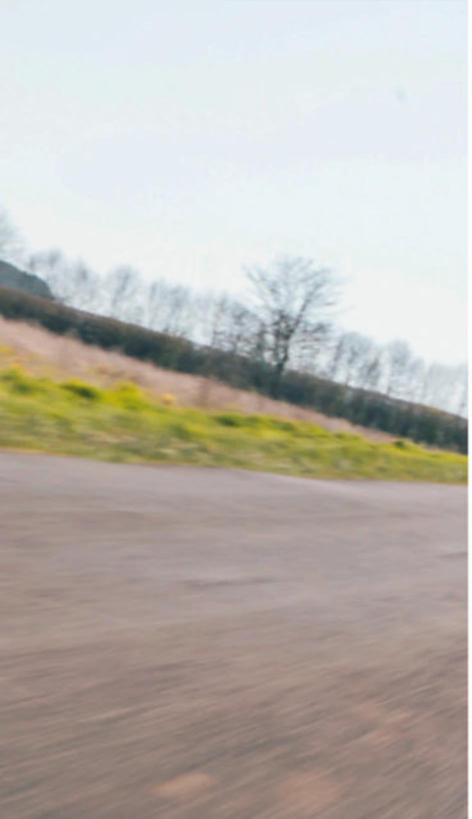
ILLYA VERPRAET



The interior always looks racy but you don't have to have the serious buckets

TESTER'S NOTE

The carbon-backed bucket seats are part of the £9500 M Race Track Package, which also adds carbon interior trim, a carbon roof, a higher top speed and a voucher for race track training. **IV**



TECH SPEC

BMW M2 MANUAL

BMW's smallest performance coupé retains all that was good about it as it gains 20bhp and a slightly heightened chassis balance

★★★★½

Price £64,613
Engine 6 cyls in line, 2993cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol
Power 473bhp at 6250rpm
Torque 406lb ft at 2650-6130rpm
Gearbox 6-spd manual, RWD
Kerb weight 1705kg
0-62mph 4.2sec
Top speed 155mph
Economy 28.0mpg
CO_2, tax band 229g/km, 37%
Rivals Porsche 718 Cayman GTS 4.0, Lotus Emira V6, Mercedes-AMG CLE 53 Coupé

AUTOCAR PODCAST

MY WEEK IN CARS

Steve Cropley

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TESTER'S NOTE
As well as a 520-litre boot, the Sealion 7 has a 58-litre frunk that will mostly be used for charging cable storage. Both are notably smaller than the Model Y's, though. **JW**

TESTED 20.3.25, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

BYD SEALION 7

Has China's biggest car maker managed to create a Tesla-beating SUV?

BYD's quest for world domination (see p15) continues with the UK launch of the Sealion 7, the latest model in its maritime-themed range, following the Seal, Dolphin and Seal U.

BYD's fourth electric car here, the Sealion 7 is essentially an SUV alternative to the Seal saloon (the Seal U SUV, a plug-in hybrid, is entirely different from either).

The line-up consists of three specifications. The single-motor RWD Comfort and dual-motor AWD Design cars use an 82.2kWh battery for ranges of 300 and 283 miles respectively and can charge at speeds of up to 150kW, while the AWD Excellence uses a 91.3kWh battery that gives a 312-mile range and can charge as fast as 230kW.

The Sealion 7's performance figures suggest it's no blubbery ocean puppy. BYD presents it as a premium performance SUV, so even in its entry-level specification you get 308bhp and a 0-62mph time of 6.7sec.

Both the AWD models produce a hefty 522bhp and 509lb ft of torque, slashing the 0-62mph time to just 4.5sec. That's faster than the Audi Q4 E-tron 55 (5.4sec) and Polestar 3 Long Range Dual Motor Performance (4.7sec) – impressive.

But while it fulfils the speed side of the performance SUV brief, the Sealion 7 is less qualified in other vital areas. It's fairly easy to place, but there's little steering feel or engagement on offer and its 2.3-tonne kerb weight combined with the soft suspension results in significant body roll and indirect handling, sapping your confidence.

The ride, meanwhile, is too softly damped and bouncy (perhaps the only characteristic of the car that lives up to its name) and can feel uncomfortable on lumpier B-roads. Matters improve on the motorway, with cracks and bumps ironed out more effectively, even on the 20in wheels of our AWD Design test car.

It's quiet inside too, effectively suppressing road and wind noise.

The Sealion 7 has plush and cosseting faux leather seats as standard or real leather if you step up to Excellence spec. The materials used on the doors, dash and centre console feel soft and premium, if a little plasticky – a step up from the Tesla Model Y.

The cabin is airy, brightened by an enormous panoramic sunroof, and particularly roomy: rear leg room is bountiful.

BYD's unique rotating 15.6in touchscreen has been updated with new infotainment software, which looks crisp and clear and comes with a host of new, quick-access swipe commands for controlling vital functions like the climate.

In practice, they're confusing and too distracting to use on the move, and BYD's rampant ADAS waste no time telling you this, bonging at every possible moment.

Furthermore, the translation issues and nonsensical menus we saw on this car's European launch are still at large.

The Sealion 7 claws back some lost ground with its impressive standard equipment. The Comfort model starts at £46,990 and gets a heated steering wheel, a reversing camera, heated front and rear seats, air purification, dual-zone climate control, wireless smartphone charging, front and rear parking sensors and keyless entry.

The upper models are poorer value, though. The Design adds the second motor for more power and 20in wheels for £51,990, while the Excellence gets leather seats and a head-up display for an eye-watering £58,990. For £3000 less, you could opt for an AWD Model Y or Ford Capri, both of which offer similar equipment and all the necessary performance but, vitally, a significantly longer range and a better ride and handling balance.

JACK WARRICK

Sealion 7 will get you from A to B very quickly but not especially comfortably

Plusher than a Tesla interior but no less distracting

TECH SPEC

BYD SEALION 7 AWD DESIGN

Powerful, roomy and well equipped but let down by a middling range, poor ride comfort and a high price

★★★☆☆

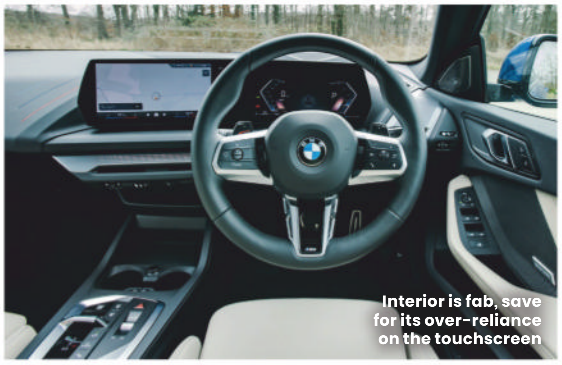
Price £51,990
Engine Asynchronous motor (f), permanent magnet synchronous motor (r)
Power 522bhp
Torque 509lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, 4WD
Kerb weight 2340kg
0-62mph 4.5sec
Top speed 133mph
Battery 82.5kWh
Range, economy 283 miles, 2.9mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 2%
Rivals Hyundai Ioniq 5, Tesla Model Y

TESTED 11.3.25, OXFORDSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

BMW 2 SERIES GRAN COUPE

New front-driven compact saloon tested in entry-level three-pot form

Handles nicely but your backside is punished for it



Interior is fab, save for its over-reliance on the touchscreen

Following the renewal of the 1 Series hatchback, the 2 Series Gran Coupé has officially entered its second generation, with its chassis code changing from F40 to F70 (any similarity to Ferraris, living or dead, is purely coincidental). But look closely at the silhouette, the body panels and the engines on offer and you will quickly realise that this is really an update of the original car, albeit a heavy one.

Like the 1 Series, the 2 Series Active Tourer MPV and combustion-engined Mini models, the 2 Series Gran Coupé uses the natively front-driven UKL2 platform. However, BMW claims that it has managed to increase the structure's rigidity in addition to the visual updates.

The car has also got 20mm longer, although that comes from the redesigned bumpers, since the wheelbase remains the same.

We drove the sporty M235 Gran Coupé abroad a few weeks ago (Autocar, 26 February), but it's the rest of the powertrain line-up that has received the bigger changes.

Petrol versions have lost the 'i' in their model names because petrol power is now the default, rather than because the new 220 has adopted a carburetted 2.0-litre straight six (it hasn't). Instead, this entry-level version is an evolution of the old 218i, with a 155bhp version of the same 1.5-litre turbocharged three-cylinder unit, newly boosted by mild-hybrid technology. This involves a 0.96kWh battery under the boot floor. Inside the seven-speed dual-clutch automatic gearbox is a 20bhp electric motor that can regenerate up to 15kW. Together, they make a healthy 168bhp.

The next step up is the 223 xDrive, which replaces the old 220i and uses a 2.0-litre turbo four-cylinder with the same gearbox and mild-hybrid system for 215bhp, plus a clutch-based four-wheel drive system.

The interior has had much the same changes as the 1 Series we road tested recently (Autocar, 31 December 2024). In short, the build quality, material richness and driving position are top-notch, justifying the 2 Series Gran Coupé's positioning as a compact premium car. However, user-friendliness leaves much to be desired. Almost everything is on the touchscreen, which has some confusing menus and small icons and can sometimes be slow to respond, particularly first thing in the morning.

Also, due to the new mild-hybrid battery, the boot capacity has shrunk to 360 litres.

We have now driven the 220 Gran Coupé in the UK. It's fast enough, with the electrical assistance lending sufficient accessible torque in everyday motoring. That said, a three-cylinder unit feels a bit mean when the Volkswagen Golf has at least a four-pot these days, even with all the sound insulation that BMW has clearly devoted to it.

It will do 50mpg if you behave yourself, which is similar to what you will get from other mild-hybrid C-segment cars.

While the powertrain is fine, the suspension is shockingly firm – fairly well damped and not harsh but so unrelentingly busy. This gives the car incisive turn-in, and it's quite keen to rotate on a trailing throttle, but none of that could be worth the trade-off in ride comfort. The steering is fairly lifeless too. Unlike the 1 Series, the 2 Series Gran Coupé is available only in M Sport trim in the UK, so it always gets the sports suspension.

The 220 Gran Coupé certainly holds some appeal as a premium compact car that's less expensive than the BMW 3 Series, Mercedes C-Class or Audi A5. The interior feels high-quality, the driving position is great and the mild-hybrid triple is quite economical. But surely a BMW ought to offer some added value with its chassis set-up or engine. This one certainly tries very hard to be sporty but is only partially successful and makes some significant sacrifices.

ILLYA VERPRAET

TECH SPEC

BMW 220 GRAN COUPE M SPORT

Heavy update of small saloon adds well-resolved mild-hybrid tech but the interior and chassis revamps achieve mixed results

★★★☆☆

Price £35,705

Engine 3 cyls in line, 1499cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus electric motor

Power 168bhp at 4700-6500rpm

Torque 207lb ft at 1500-4400rpm

Gearbox 7-spd dual-clutch automatic, FWD

Kerb weight 1450kg

0-62mph 7.9sec

Top speed 143mph

Economy 52.3mpg

CO_2, tax band 121g/km, 29%

Rivals Mercedes CLA 200, Mazda 3 Saloon

TESTER'S NOTE

BMW's iDrive software is so optimised for touchscreen inputs that it actually works better without the control dial found in the new X3. Here the screen is less of a stretch away and the shortcut buttons are in your eyeline. Still not a patch on the old iDrive, though. **IV**

TESTED 18.3.25, MIDDLESEX **DELIVERIES** NOW

LAND ROVER DISCOVERY SPORT

Another refresh for JLR's old stager

THE DISCOVERY SPORT has been on sale for more than a decade now, so last year Land Rover made some changes, mainly to its interior, in an effort to fend off fresher rival SUVs from Germany and beyond.

The latest iteration features a new front grille, revised LED headlights and a suite of new technology, while more electric-only range has been added to the plug-in hybrid variant.

As the old saying goes, 'if it ain't broke, don't fix it', and Land Rover should have borne this in mind when redesigning the baby Discovery's interior, because it has actually made it less usable.

Previously, you were given a central touchscreen and a cluster of knobs and buttons for the climate controls, which meant changing the temperature or fan speed was a seamless process. Now they're gone, the Discovery Sport having followed its Range Rover cousins in adopting a more minimalist dashboard and JLR's latest 11.4in Pivi Pro touchscreen, which houses all of the car's key functions. This means you have to prod and poke around with the screen to use the air conditioning and other useful features, which is far more distracting when you're driving.

The screen itself is generally good, but it's far from perfect: there are far too many menus and sub-menus to deal with and some of the icons are frustratingly small, which again makes it a challenge to use on the move. It's not the most responsive system either. At least it's easy to connect your phone via Apple CarPlay or Android Auto, which you will probably end up using most of the time.

Interior is now more minimalist and as a result less user-friendly

The fit and finish of the cabin has a premium feel to it. Some materials, like those in the centre console, feel a bit cheap, but there are soft-touch elements in all the right places and it feels robust without sacrificing quality.

Our D200 test car, which used a 201bhp mild-hybrid 2.0-litre diesel four-pot, was pleasant to punt around in, too. The engine lacked a little mechanical refinement and sounded a bit gruff at lower speeds, but it had more than enough grunt and felt at home when cruising along the motorway. Economy was in the region of 40mpg.

The Discovery Sport remains competitive in this segment. It's comfortable, spacious, flexible, relaxing to drive and, as long as you don't go crazy with options, well priced. It's just a real shame that Land Rover has created these touchscreen frustrations.

SAM PHILLIPS

TECH SPEC

LAND ROVER DISCOVERY SPORT D200 DYNAMIC HSE

Interior tech update has hindered ease of use, but strong practicality, comfort and refinement remain

★★★⯪☆

Price £52,365
Engine 4 cyls in line, 1998cc, turbocharged, diesel, plus 48V ISG
Power 201bhp at 3750rpm
Torque 317lb ft at 1750-2500rpm
Gearbox 9-spd automatic, 4WD
Kerb weight 1874kg
0-62mph 8.1sec
Top speed 130mph
Economy 39.8mpg
CO_2, tax band 186g/km, 37%
Rivals Audi Q5, BMW X3, Volvo XC60

TESTED 3.3.25, SURREY **DELIVERIES** NOW

MASERATI GRECALE FOLGORE

Production version of electric SUV

YOU'VE GOT TO award Maserati some points for bravery. It has been among the first prestige brands to introduce fully electric versions of its models in addition to fizzy petrol equivalents, giving the discerning Italian-car fan the freedom to choose.

The Grecale Folgore is the most everyday of Maserati's EV offerings, if you can say that of a £100k SUV. We drove an early left-hand-drive one last year and were uninspired by its ride and handling, even if its 550bhp proved appropriately rabid. Is this full production right-hand-drive car any better? Not really, no. The Grecale Folgore is heavy, at 2480kg, and while the standard air suspension has been reworked to account for that, the EV still struggles to manages its bulk.

In the comfort-oriented modes, there's noticeable float and wallow to the body control, despite higher-frequency intrusions still sending shivers and thumps into the cabin via the standard 20in alloy wheels and Bridgestone Potenza rubber.

Sport and Corsa modes tighten up the body control but don't solve the heave and head toss, meaning the Grecale Folgore feels too softly sprung yet too harshly damped, regardless of which mode it's in.

This is all subtle enough that it may not be a deal-breaker if you've really fallen for the Grecale Folgore's slick looks, big pace and useful interior space, but the (slightly larger) Lotus Eletre and (slightly smaller) Porsche Macan Electric are both far better to drive.

They also go further on a charge, managing 370 to 400-ish miles of WLTP range, compared with just 310 miles for the Grecale Folgore, despite its chunky 97kWh battery.

Efficiency isn't this Maserati's forte, then, and neither is charging, since its 150kW maximum rate is also below par for the class.

Cabin can be specced in a mix of artificial leather and Econyl

Yet it looks lovely, the interior is spacious and classy and, while the infotainment system is a bit fussy, with double screens for separate media and cabin comfort controls, the graphics are great and there's full phone integration, intelligent route planning (including charging stops) and all that good stuff.

Overall, then, the Grecale Folgore isn't without merit but doesn't handle with the effervescence that you may expect and is expensive by any measure.

The lustre and rarity factor of the trident badge will always have a certain appeal, but let's face it: you've got to be truly, madly in love with the Grecale Folgore to make that call.

VICKY PARROTT

TECH SPEC

MASERATI GRECALE FOLGORE

Not without appeal but very hard to justify, given the abundance of objectively better competition

★★⯪☆☆

Price £99,165
Engine Two permanent magnet synchronous motors
Power 550bhp
Torque 809lb ft
Gearbox 1-spd reduction gear, 4WD
Kerb weight 2480kg
0-62mph 4.1sec
Top speed 137mph
Battery 105/97kWh (total/usable)
Range, economy 310 miles, 2.6mpkWh
CO_2, tax band 0g/km, 2%
Rivals Polestar 3, Mercedes-Benz EQE SUV

ROAD TEST

AUTOCAR **ROAD TEST 5735**

ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH

V12-engined super-GT arrives with lofty ambitions. What's the reality?

MODEL TESTED
ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH
Price £334,000
Power 824bhp at 6500rpm
Torque 738lb ft at 2500-5000rpm
0-60mph 3.1sec
30-70mph 2.3sec
Top speed 214mph (claimed)
Average economy 19.3mpg
Touring economy 25.8mpg
CO_2 emissions 312g/km
70-0mph 39.0m (9.5deg C, dry)

Aston Martin is seldom far from the headlines. In 2025, there is more talk of debt piles, the trimming down of the workforce and share price woes. It is enough to make you wonder if the company will ever make the leap from being “a high-potential business to a high-performing one”, as new CEO Adrian Hallmark, formerly of Bentley, recently put it. It is, in short, easy to feel a little downbeat.

But then something like the new Vanquish shows up for its full road test and you wonder, for a moment, how the company that makes such a machine isn’t also making money hand over fist in the process. We sometimes talk of cars needing to ‘succeed as an object’, and when it comes to this subjective trait, few if any do it as reliably well as whatever the latest V12-hearted super-GT out of Gaydon happens to be.

Flagship Astons are never quite perfect, and in the coming pages we will explore what this 824bhp rival to Ferrari’s 12Cilindri (we can agree the Brit has the better name, surely?) does well and where it is lacking. But the ability of this new Vanquish to awaken the inner 10-year-old petrolhead in driver and onlooker alike is beyond doubt.

This is a poignant car too. The third coming of the Vanquish – a lineage that stretches back to 2001 – will most likely be the last to feature 12 cylinders. If nothing changes in a regulatory sense, then 2028 will be the final year of production. Even today, Aston is capping the number of examples at 1000 annually in order for the company to meet its fleet emissions obligations. The knock-on effect is that the Vanquish will be a more uncommon sight on the road than either the Ferrari or Lamborghini’s 1001bhp Revuelto.

So this Aston will have an alluring rarity. And we know that it will have an ungodly turn of pace (stay tuned to discover just how ungodly). But real success for the Vanquish means combining its speed with palatable long-distance manners, and dancing on the line between thrilling, expressive handling and trustworthy, A-to-B poise. Owners won’t thank their car for scaring them witless on what should have been an enjoyable road, no matter how effortless the preceding miles.

Equally, an Aston like this needs a hint of fear factor. Also good practicality. And specialness. It’s a tall order for any car aiming to be the world’s finest super-GT. Is the Vanquish that car? Let’s find out.

DBS 770 Ultimate set tone for Vanquish

DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★★☆

PROS Twin-turbo V12 hits higher heights; superb weight distribution
CONS Body is a touch ungainly from some angles; close to two tonnes

Despite the unimaginative (or perhaps the appreciably subtle?) spec of our test car, there’s no doubt that the Mk3 Vanquish is a striking super-GT with perhaps the most predatory silhouette of any front-engined, series-production Aston to date – which is saying something.

The bulbous snout of the old DBS Superleggera – the model that preceded this Mk3 Vanquish and a Vanquish in all but name – has been toned down and the front of the car is essentially a super-sized interpretation of what we have already seen on the Vantage. To our eyes, this is no bad thing, but the real fireworks are reserved for those in the rear-view mirror. The back of the car looks faintly Shelby Daytona-inspired, with a Kamm-tail style and a curving Gurney lip. Visually, it takes a bit of getting used to, especially the enormous central panel, which can be painted body-coloured or has the carbonfibre left exposed, but we consider this a successful attempt to move Aston’s design language on. It certainly gives the Vanquish monumental presence. Note also that the body is a fully carbonfibre affair, and there is certainly no shortage of it either.

In terms of footprint, the new Vanquish is a mite narrower than the Superleggera but it’s 14cm longer, most of that increase coming from inside the wheelbase, specifically between the A-pillar and front axle. The car’s 2885mm wheelbase is also considerably longer than that of the new Ferrari 12Cilindri, which also has rear-steer – tech the Aston still goes without. Is this a limitation? We’ll soon see.

Meanwhile, the kerb weight is a claimed 1835kg and we weighed this car at 1952kg, with its 82-litre tank full. That represents a 42kg gain on the Superleggera tested in 2018 and tallies with the increased size of the Vanquish. Ferrari, for context, claims a dry weight of 1560kg for the 12Cilindri, though in our experience this means the Italian car will hit around 1770kg in running order. We will verify that later this year. Meanwhile, Bentley’s hulking new hybrid-V8 Conti GT Speed is a passenger shy of 2500kg.

This time around, the Vanquish’s bonded aluminium chassis is new, rather than being adapted from a lower-rung Aston (it would have been the DB12) and is said to be 75% more laterally stiff than that of even the DBS 770 Ultimate – a special edition of the DBS Superleggera that took the senior Aston GT to new heights of power, panache and price in 2023. Suspension is by double wishbones at the front, where a new strut brace gives increased mounting stiffness for Bilstein’s ▸

■ Exhaust tips are more prominent than ever. You can fit an optional titanium system, which saves around 10kg and gives the V12 an even shriller note at the top of its 7000rpm rev range. We’d have it.

■ The Vanquish is available with a number of wheel designs, though all are 21in in diameter. The contact patch is wider than that of the DBS Superleggera at both ends, and especially the back. These ‘Star’ wheels are the lightest available.

■ Stacked rear LED blades will be a pain at the car wash but add a good dose of visual interest and take up impressively little space as they trace the outer edge of the body. They were first seen on the Valkyrie.

■ Vanquish’s carbon bonnet is, if you can believe it, around 80mm longer than even that of the DBS Superleggera and seems to go on forever. The vents aren’t quite so prominent as before, mind, and only fully reveal themselves from above.

PHOTOGRAPHY JACK HARRISON

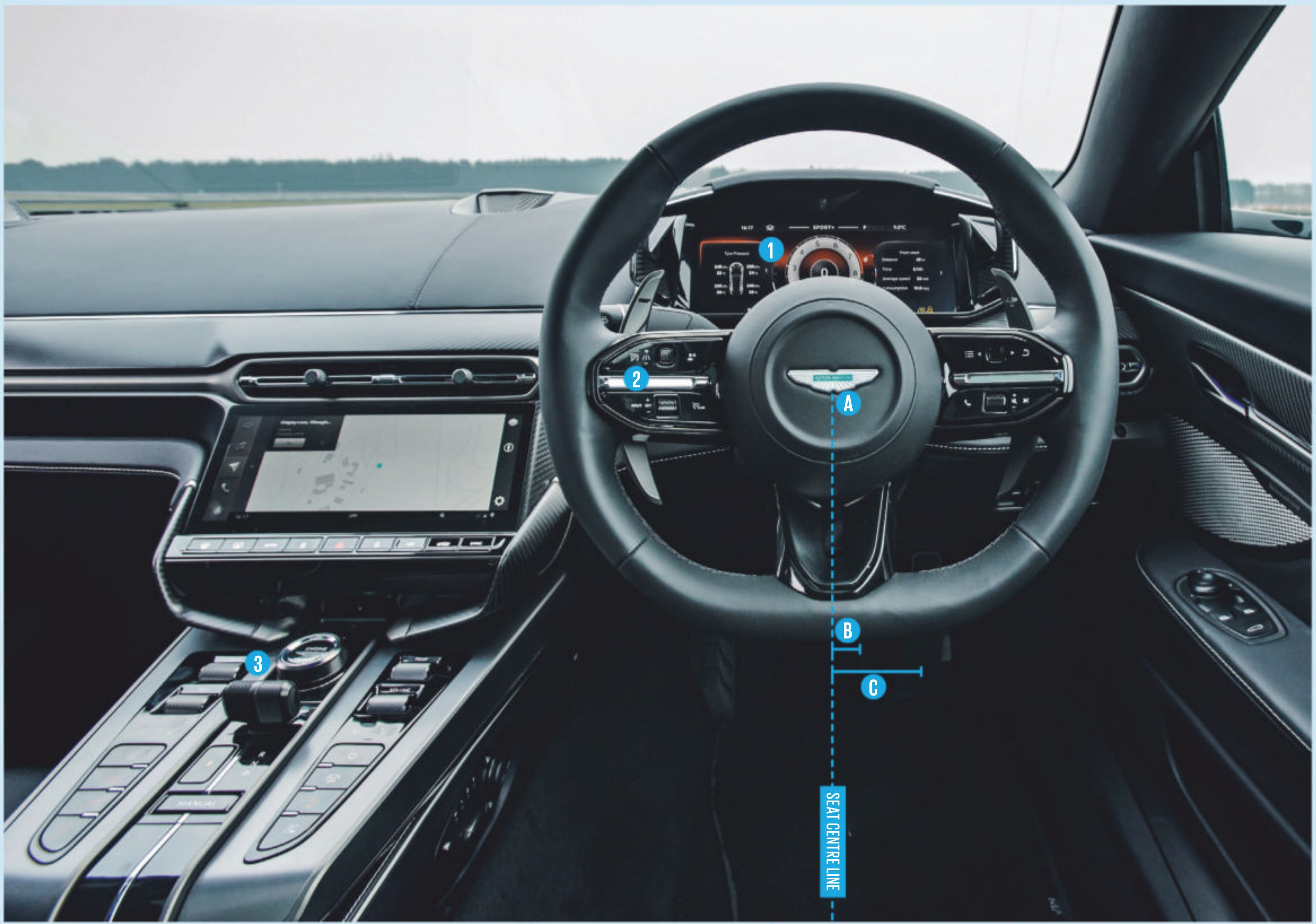
① Digital instrument binnacle can be customised to an extent and shows plenty of data. We tended to have the tacho central and the tyre temp readout in one of the windows to the side – it pays to keep an eye on them.

② Steering wheel controls look neat enough but the touchpad used to navigate the driver display continues to frustrate with its latency. A physical scroller would have been better. Ferrari isn't immune from criticism here either.

③ Big rotary control takes you through the driving modes – Wet, Individual, GT, Sport, Sport+ – without the need to take your eyes off the road. The transmission tunnel also has useful buttons for damper response and exhaust mode.

16:07
4
On Off
Traction Control level 4
245 kPa 37°C
240 kPa 33°C
P OFF

Bowers & Wilkins



WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT Ⓐ Steering offset 0mm Ⓑ Brake offset 40mm right Ⓒ Accelerator offset 160mm right. The driving position is well aligned but can feel a little high-set at first. The trick is to tilt the seat back, not simply lower it. This gets your backside low and your legs nicely angled.

◂ DTX adaptive dampers (borrowed from the DB12, but with a fresh tune). Further stiffening comes from a thicker front undertray, and there's another one found under the back axle, with its multi-link layout.

Prise open the bonnet (now rear-hinged, losing the Superleggera's clamshell) and there it is: 824bhp and 738lb ft of UK-designed-and-made V12, tucked juicily back towards the scuttle. Aston has redeveloped its biggest engine for this car. Now made by Grantham-based Autocraft Solutions (after the closure of Ford's Cologne engine plant in 2021), this 5.2-litre mill may have the same cylinder dimensions and bank angle as before, but it has been largely re-engineered, with the block and conrods strengthened. The cams have been reprofiled and there are repositioned spark plug and higher-flow-rate injectors than those used for the 5.2 in the DBS Superleggera.

New induction and exhaust systems also make for better combustion and onward gas flow. Smaller, 15%-faster-spinning turbochargers enable more broad and responsive torque production, which exceeds the output of the naturally aspirated 12Cilindri by 238lb ft. There's also a new Boost Reserve feature, where turbo pressure is generated beyond the level required on part-throttle, so that turbo lag is reduced should the driver suddenly ask for more shove. It's a take on 'anti-lag' that today is a little more acceptable than squirting fuel into a hot exhaust and it achieves its goal by balancing the throttle flap position and the 'intelligent' wastegate in the turbos. To the driver, the level of thrust is commensurate with the position of the accelerator pedal, but the system is actually accumulating boost pressure in the background.

Downstream of the V12 is an eight-speed ZF transaxle, which shares a housing with the limited-slip differential. For the first time on any V12 Aston, it is electronically controlled and can transition from fully open to 100% locked in 135 milliseconds. Its response is also plumbed into the hard-working ESP.

INTERIOR

★★★½☆

PROS Feels expansive – and expensive; good all-round visibility
CONS Luggage capacity; slight lack of theatre; infotainment latency

Relative to the DBS Superleggera, the Mk3 Vanquish improves on usability but appears to have lost some sense of occasion in the process. The dashboard is neater, certainly, and visibility better, but you don't feel quite so embedded in the belly of the beast, or perched right over the back axle, with your eyeline barely cresting the scuttle. For some, the Vanquish's (slightly) reduced intimidation factor will of course be welcomed. This is an exceptionally wide and long device given it offers only two seats and it requires acclimatisation when navigating cities and B-roads alike. Many will also welcome the sense of space resulting from the fitment of a large panoramic glass roof panel – something the Superleggera was never offered with, and that makes the Vanquish relaxing company.

Equally, some will also find the cabin architecture and the fittings too close to those of the Vantage. There are limits to how much a low-volume maker can diverge its various models in this respect, but a more sculpted dashboard or a unique cowling for the instrument binnacle may have been warranted in a car that costs more than twice as much as the Vanquish does.

Nonetheless, the Vanquish's cabin is still an expensive-looking one in term of materials and switchgear, and in the prevailing standard for fit and finish. There are knurled metallised knobs and switches to lure your fingertips, and plenty of tactile materials besides. Walnut, ash, metals and carbonfibre are all yours at the tick of an option box, and despite the monochrome scheme of our test car there's no shortage of available colours for the supple leather upholstery. The digital instrumentation is pretty clear and readable, too, and in general this feels a modern cockpit with some old-world lavishness.

The touchscreen infotainment set-up is unsurprisingly transferred from Aston's other models. It's a little less easy to navigate than some touchscreen systems and a bit less responsive too. But it's furnished with smartphone-mirroring compatibility (at least, for those with an iPhone) and remains a step forward from where Aston was on digital technology a couple of years ago. There is also wireless phone charging inside the armrest, where you'll find two USB-C ports as well.

Luggage space remains an issue for Aston's flagship V12. There's less boot capacity in the Vanquish than in the Vantage (see 'In the boot', right). And while there is some luggage space behind the seats, in the form of little terraces above and below an artfully integrated, carbonfibre-ensconced lateral brace, it's not a hugely useful arrangement and getting the best out of it relies on the owner having bought a set of four satchel-type bags. They do look lovely, mind.

PERFORMANCE

★★★★★

PROS Colossal mid-range thrust; rip-snorting sound; epic braking

CONS Gearbox is strong but lacks the precision of dual-clutch options

Prod the hefty 'engine on' button and a starter motor whirrs away somewhere in the distance, in characteristically extended Aston Martin fashion, before the V12 fires cleanly with a primal gargle. ▶

BACK IN TIME...

Our first road test of a Vanquish (right) came in 2001, when we said it "sounds better and goes as hard" as the Ferrari 550 Maranello. High praise. Equally, so dire was the fuel economy and so meagre the fuel capacity that a charge across European motorways would mean service station stops on an hourly basis. The new Vanq does far better in this regard.

It's also worth noting that the Mk1 Vanquish's asking price of £158k translates to £291k today with inflation, which shines a favourable light on the outwardly mighty cost of the new – and massively more advanced – version tested here. The Mk1 wasn't slow, though: its standing kilometre of 22.9sec is only four seconds or so shy of today's car.

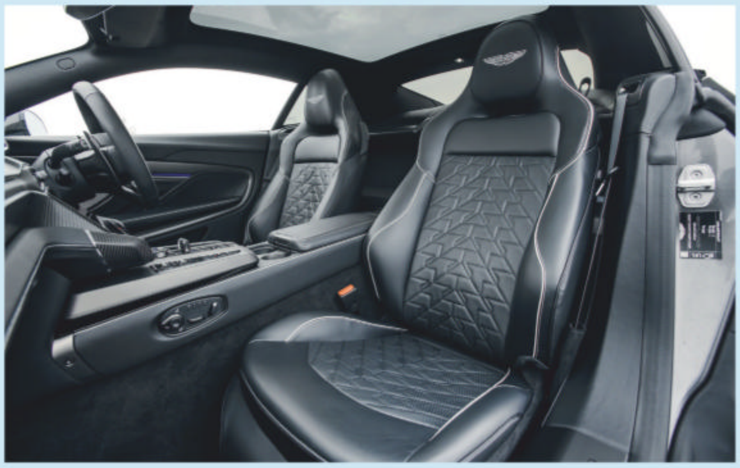
IN THE BOOT

With luxury GT cars, there's often a surprising amount of cargo capacity in the boot. This is not the case with the Vanquish and it's one of the few real weak spots in the package. At 248 litres, there's nearly 100 litres less space than in the smaller Vantage, though in fairness the junior car does benefit from having a hatchback, whereas the Vanquish has a compartment that is entirely cut off from the main cabin (which benefits rolling refinement). Nonetheless, the Vanquish still trails its direct rivals. Ferrari 12Cilindri? 270 litres. Maserati Granturismo Trofeo? 310 litres.

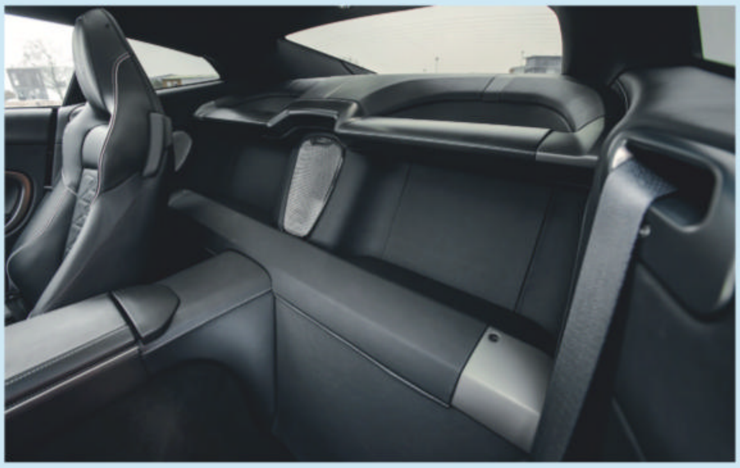
The Aston's capacity will suffice for weekend trips, but for anybody planning on staying away from home for a week or two, perhaps while using their Vanquish abroad and acquiring the spoils of a good European holiday along the way, the shortage of carrying capacity could make you wish you'd taken the DBX instead.

Aston does insist that the boot will take a set of golf clubs, and to prove it you can even option a branded golf bag made by Callaway, replete with covers for your clubs. There's also a luggage set comprising two flight cases and four holdalls, all of which, we presume, will fit snug in the boot.

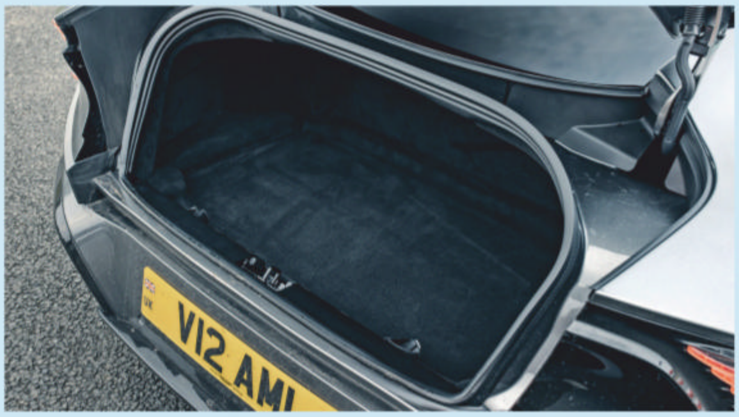
Inside the cabin, the previous Vanquish (2012-2018) had back seats but these were done away with for the DBS Superleggera. The latest model continues in the two-seat vein, though there is a reasonable amount of storage space behind those seats, even if it is set out in such a way that larger items of luggage are ruled out. It does feel as though the designers could have unified the upper slots to create a single large, flat, horseshoe-shaped space for more luggage.



FRONT Leg room 1170mm, head room 970mm. The standard seat could do with being a little more sculpted but there's plenty of room up front.



REAR Aston's top GT now doesn't have back seats, breaking new ground for the format. The cross-brace is handsome but not especially practical.



BOOT Length 560mm, width 830-1240mm, height 420mm. Vanquish's compact boot will swallow golf clubs but is disappointingly small overall.

“The chassis is laughably easy to manipulate with bottomless V12 torque”

◂ It is quite the curtain-raiser, and this is still with the Vanquish in its buttoned-down GT running mode.

For performance testing, Sport+ is required and it is just as well that we have MIRA at hand, because to experience the Vanquish at its full, wonderfully effusive, monstrously quick potential, you really do need the expanses of an empty industry proving ground at your disposal.

Aston doesn’t prioritise standing starts when it comes to gearbox calibration but 3.1sec to 60mph is nevertheless world-class for this type of car and is more than half a second quicker than our time for the DBS Superleggera. The Vanquish’s new, 20mm-wider rear Pirellis help make use of its additional 109bhp, and while step-off itself is steady, almost immediately thereafter the chassis electronics do a deft job of limiting slip while allowing maximum forward motion. Triple figures come up after just 6.2sec, which matches to the very tenth the lighter Ferrari 812 Superfast – a car only marginally less powerful than the Vanquish and from a philosophical standpoint very much a snarling supercar in GT drag.

Fact is, launching a Vanquish is initially a bit undramatic. It’s only when the tyres are fully hooked up from the top of second gear onward, and the ESP can lower its guard – allowing 738lb ft to flow unfettered to the back axle as each new gear engages and the crank is returned into the furnace of the V12’s broad torque band – that you start to feel the car in full flight. And it is then breathtaking. Figuratively; literally.

There’s also immense satisfaction in wringing this V12 to its 7000rpm limit. Its ferocity doesn’t noticeably taper under the strain of increasing rotational inertia. Instead, it spins freely and sounds superbly tuneful, just when an engine of a blown nature and vast scale might begin to wilt. There is, admits Aston, a synthesised element to the intake and exhaust note, but it’s subtle and realistic and we didn’t mind it. Hold onto a big gear and the way the V12 changes in sonic character is always entertaining.

You won’t be surprised to learn that there is also satisfaction to be had at the foot of the rev range, where downshifts are also optional. Peak torque develops at 2500rpm

Formidable, 325-section Pirellis versus more than 800bhp? Only one winner

Vanquish has a superb natural balance and the new e-LSD doesn’t hurt

TRACK NOTES ★★★★☆

PROS A senior Aston GT that's composed on track; playfulness **CONS** This much mass requires some babying; gearbox response

Aston Martin is unlikely to swap its homologation base for the GT3 racing class from Vantage to Vanquish any time soon, but should an owner of this 824bhp behemoth venture onto a circuit, there's little to fear and plenty to enjoy, so long as they respect the monumental physics at play.

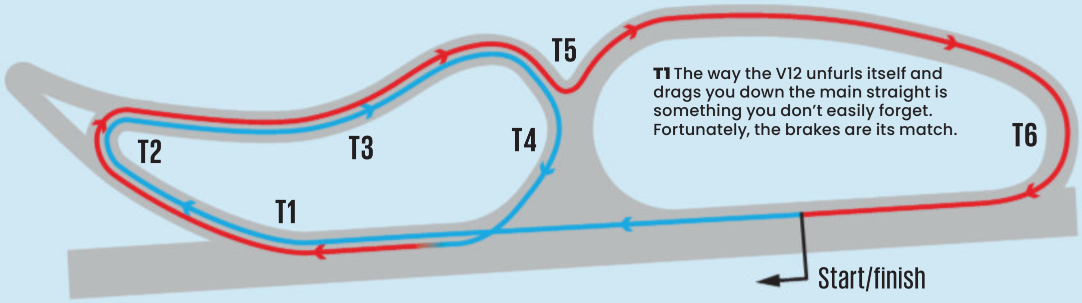
The Vanquish is a big GT with what amounts to bottomless propulsive force. Through fast transitions, it will take a moment to settle as weight quickly shifts from one side to the other, and while there's a huge amount of lateral grip to be clawed from the front axle, steering response isn't hair-trigger swift, as it is in mid-engined supercars. It needs considered inputs. Do that and there's a base level of control and a predictability to the movements that breeds confidence.

It is, in short, easy to find yourself taking the Vanquish by the scruff, driving it positively and aggressively through corners, and exploring the scope of the V12 more than you thought possible. This wasn't the case with the previous Vanquish, and while the DBS Superleggera marked a step-change for the better, the latest Vanquish is even better still.

At the limit of adhesion, it also shows a little less of an understeer balance than the Vantage, feeling on the cusp of oversteer a lot of the time, though not in a frightening way (that is, if you don't want it to be). There's a multi-stage traction control system too, which allows the driver to lean on the chassis and explore the torque reserves of the V12 in relative security. It becomes accessible when you fully deactivate the car's ESP.

Turn everything off and you do need to be on your mark, however. Having established traction on the way out of a bend, under full throttle the Vanquish can push its back axle out of line in insouciant fashion, often when you thought you were out of the woods. It's immensely exciting but, as we say, demands a good deal of respect.

HORIBA MIRA HANDLING AND STABILITY CIRCUIT



T1 The way the V12 unfurls itself and drags you down the main straight is something you don't easily forget. Fortunately, the brakes are its match.

T2 Hairpin turns the Vanq into a smoke machine with ease, but it's the power of the brakes on the way in, and the grip of the front axle, that most impressed us.

T6 Get T6 right and the result is spectacular: near-perfect mid-corner balance followed by a full-throttle exit with a hint of yaw, if you'd like. Be delicate with the steering, mind – the car won't easily tolerate one correction after another.

and the car's 3.9sec 30-70mph time in fourth gear highlights the scope of its immense tractability. Even the electric-assisted Revuelto could hardly go quicker in this metric. The uptake of boost is brutish from 2000rpm, but once you're beyond that point, tip-in response is fairly neat and manageable and the delivery linear, if not anything like as precise as it is in the 12Cilindri.

It all makes the V12 enjoyable company on the open road, where it defines the word 'effortless' in its ability to work the chassis at any moment, but will, if you fancy it, always reward a foray to the redline. As for the gearbox, it is effective enough but no joy, sometimes seeming reluctant to downshift in its automatic setting and not offering much tactility if you take manual control (which, usefully, can be locked in with a dedicated button on the transmission tunnel). That said, it rarely inhibits your fun.

Another surprising strength of the Vanquish is its ability to shed speed (useful, that). In fact, the 38.0m required to haul up from 70mph in our final brake fade test elicited a double-take at the datalog. That is 30cm less than the current Porsche 911 Turbo S needed. To our knowledge, the 410mm carbon-ceramic front discs are among the largest ever fitted to a traditional performance car (ie not an SUV).

RIDE & HANDLING
★★★★⯪

PROS Pedigree handling balance; composure defies its size; great fun **CONS** A bit reactive when you just want to get from A to B; hefty too

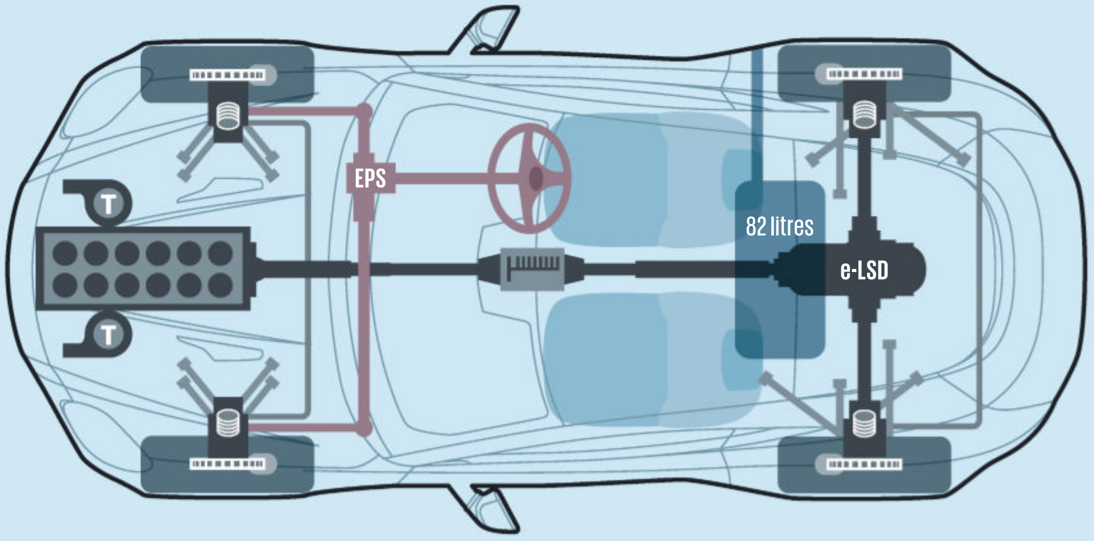
This Aston was never going to be anything less than an utter monster in terms of performance. But ride and handling? That's a murkier matter. Not least because how you regard this latest chapter in the Vanquish tale will depend on what you think a modern super-GT should be. The Mk3 Vanquish is sizeable and lavish but so too is it unapologetic and steely, for better and for worse. It seems Aston has tried to eke out as much bombast and dynamic fury as it can from this package without going so far as to undermine its critical ability as an all-day GT proposition. This is not a straightforward balance to strike. Overcook it and you will end up with something like the wild Ferrari 812 Superfast. Scintillating? Hugely. But unfit for purpose as a grand tourer. Undercook it and the result can be even worse: too much power and not enough control. Sloppiness.

At first, the Vanquish can feel awkward. At low speeds, the body heaves freely but there's a reactivity underwheel that might have been mitigated with active anti-roll bars. The sense is one of a car both highly strung yet hefty and languid; it can feel out of sync with itself as you guide the acreage ahead of you this way and that. But then again, what 214mph supercar ever relished trundling about in 40mph zones?

Hit quicker roads and the bigger picture begins to materialise. In GT mode, the dampers allow plenty of suspension travel and a fair ▸

Growth in the wheelbase is focused on the area between the A-pillar and front axle

MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION



ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH

On-the-road price £334,000
Price as tested £408,865
Value after 3yrs/36k miles £178,000
Insurance group 50

FITTED EQUIPMENT

Standard Panoramic glass roof, carbon-ceramic brake discs, stainless steel exhaust, Sports Plus Seat, Alcantara headlining, brushed aluminium centre console trim, 360deg camera system, gloss black sills, diffuser and splitter, satin-chrome caned grille, 1170W, 15-speaker Bowers & Wilkins sound system
Optional Titanium exhaust £10,000, Magnetic Silver paint £4400, Dark grille £750, matt black tailpipes £1250, 21in Star Spoke wheels £2750, Lower Body package: Gloss Black Twill Carbonfibre £13,500, Upper Body package: Gloss Black Twill Carbonfibre £9500, Shield Glass Black Twill Carbon £5000, Interior Environment Inspire – Monotone £7500

ENGINE

Installation Front, longitudinal, rear-wheel drive
Type V12, 5204cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol
Made of Aluminium block and head
Bore/stroke 89.0mm/69.7mm
Compression ratio 10.5:1
Valve gear 4 per cyl

TECHNICAL LAYOUT

Vanquish reprises the DBS Superleggera's layout, with its V12 driving the rear wheels via a transaxle, and the resulting weight distribution of 51% front and 49% rear is essentially perfect for a front-engined super-GT. Its platform is an evolution of Aston's aluminium structure; body is all CFRP.

Power 824bhp at 6500rpm
Torque 738lb ft at 2500-5000rpm
Redline 7000rpm
Specific output 158bhp per litre
Power to weight 449bhp per tonne
Torque to weight 402lb ft per tonne

GEARBOX

Type 8-spd automatic
Ratios/mph per 1000rpm
1st 5.00/5.8 **2nd** 3.20/9.1 **3rd** 2.14/13.6 **4th** 1.72/16.9 **5th** 1.31/22.2 **6th** 1.00/29.1 **7th** 0.83/35.1 **8th** 0.64/45.5
Final drive ratio 2.93:1
rpm in top gear at 70/80mph 1540/1760

CHASSIS & BODY

Construction Aluminium monocoque
Weight/as tested 1835kg/1952kg
Weight distribution (f/r) 51%/49%
Drag coefficient 0.32
Wheels 9.5Jx21in (f), 11.5Jx21in (r)
Tyres 275/35 ZR21 (f), 325/30 ZR21 (r), Pirelli P Zero AML PNCS
Spare None (mobility kit)

SUSPENSION

Front Double wishbones, adaptive dampers, coil springs, anti-roll bar
Rear Multi-link, coil springs, adaptive dampers, anti-roll bar

STEERING

Type EPAS, rack and pinion
Turns lock to lock 2.3
Turning circle 12.7m

BRAKES

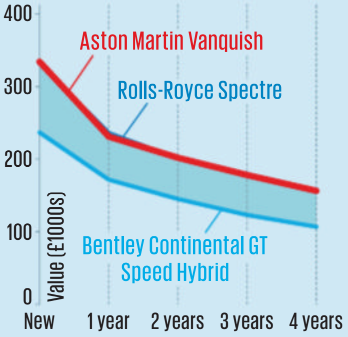
Front 410mm ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, six-piston calipers **Rear** 360mm ventilated carbon-ceramic discs, four-piston calipers **Handbrake type** Electronic, automatic

SAFETY

Active measures BSA, AEB, ACC, LKA, RCTA, ESP, TC, EBD
Euro NCAP rating Not tested

EMISSIONS & TAX

CO_2 312g/km
BIK at 20/40% pcm £2052/£4105



DEPRECIATION

First-year depreciation tipped to be brutal, as so often with V12 GTs.

◂ degree of roll, but the balance is there and it is fabulously good, despite the weight of the V12. From here, you are just a swivel of the mode selector rotary dial from unlocking the prodigious appeal of the Vanquish as a driver's car. Tighten up the body control and put the LSD on alert and you reveal the brilliance hinted at in the DBS 770, which was essentially a prototype for the sort of damping, suspension geometry and ESP tuning deployed on this Vanquish – only in the new Vanquish, there is a far stiffer, more responsive base of operations. Even for this class, the Vanquish doesn't offer the last word in steering feel (it's perfectly sped, though) but so dependable is the grip of the front axle, so sweet is the mid-corner balance and so willing is the car to alter its attitude on the throttle that you simply won't care. The Vanquish still isn't outright agile but its marriage of torque, balance and fluid control makes it such easy fun.

The ESP Track setting remains a key ally too. It allows you to safely prod away at the Vanquish's limit handling, subtly tightening the car's line on the throttle and with an ease that makes a mockery of the vast tyres – and the insurance implications of damaging those expensive CFRP body panels…

Know that care is still required. The Vanquish demands speed to thrive but too much speed and you risk bottoming it out in a way the shorter-wheelbased Vantage or DB12 wouldn't. And, beautifully cohesive as it may be (easily more so than the regular old DBS), the body movements in something of this scale will always need 5% longer to unfold than you will first be expecting, and on a particularly testing B-road the Vanquish will eventually fall out of step with the topography earlier than a DB12 would. Earlier than a 12Cilindri would too? We'll soon find.

Meanwhile, in the wet, the most sensible course of action is often to pretend you're trundling from A to B in your Prius. The Wet driving mode is smartly calibrated but so over-endowed is the Vanquish even in the dry that a wet surface can feel like you've shortened the final drive by half. Traction's a commodity.

So the Vanquish is overbearing at times but that becomes justifiable when you show one of these cars a road where its chassis, so joyously easy to manipulate with the V12's torque, can shine. A thoroughly unflustered motorway gait and an acceptable 69dBA at 70mph seal the deal. The balance of dynamism and refinement here is in keeping with Aston's brand-wide move into a sportier space but it has, in our opinion, still been sweetly struck.

BUYING & OWNING

★★★☆☆
PROS Guaranteed to be rare; price isn't out of step with other V12 cars
CONS Far more expensive than the DBS Superleggera; fuel economy

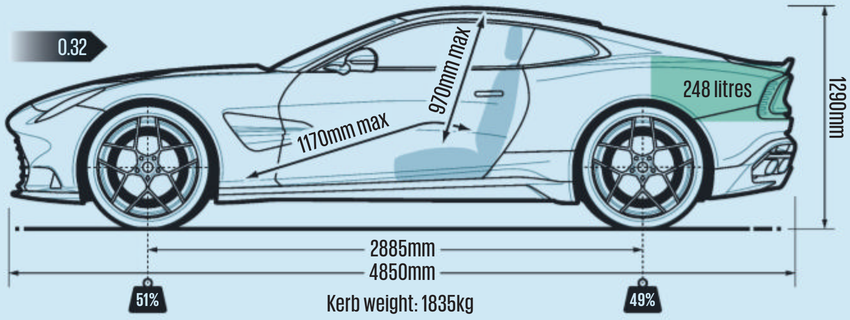
The Vanquish starts at just over £330k, but with Aston Martin's Q personalisation department, it's possible to spend rather a lot more. This pricing means the Vanquish is positioned uncannily similarly to its 12Cilindri arch-rival and it remains to be seen just how well the car's residuals will stack up, this being new ground for a series-production model from Aston. Ferrari, of course, has existed in this sphere for several years and with considerable success. A far as mainstream cars from major OEMs go, the only other V12 option one might cross-shop with the Vanquish is the Lamborghini Revuelto, though the Italian PHEV supercar is rather a different proposition, with an even higher price: £450k.

The Vanquish comes with plenty of kit, including heated and ventilated seats, plus a reversing camera. However, the four-piece cabin luggage, which makes sense of the shelving behind the seats, will put you back five figures.

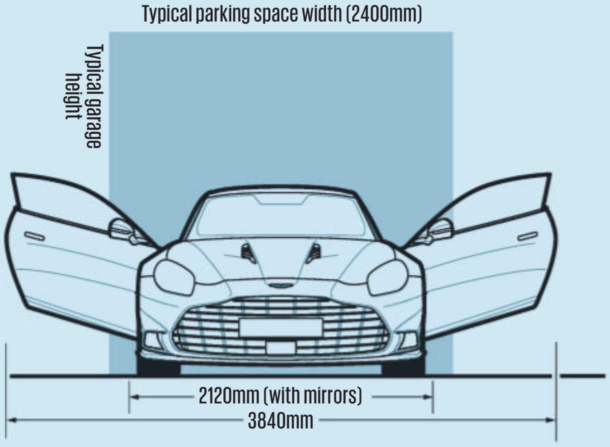
Our tested touring economy of 25.8mpg translates to a motorway range of 465 miles – a little less than Bentley's Continental GT Speed and Maserati's V6-engined Granturismo Trofeo but respectable enough. ▸

TEST RESULTS

DIMENSIONS

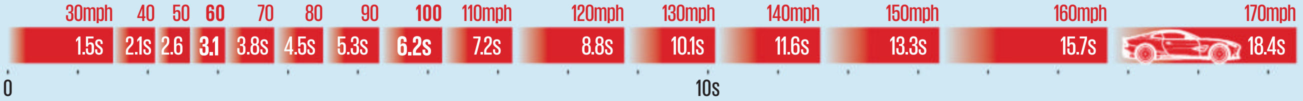

0.32
970mm max
1170mm max
248 litres
1290mm
2885mm
4850mm
Kerb weight: 1835kg
51%
49%

PARKING

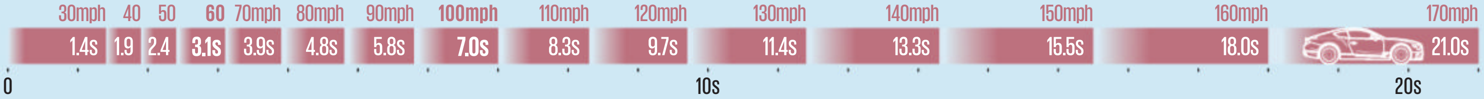

Typical parking space width (2400mm)
Typical garage height
2120mm (with mirrors)
3840mm

ACCELERATION

Test conditions 9.5deg C, dry
Standing quarter mile 11.1sec at 135.9mph **Standing km** 19.6sec at 173.8mph **30-70mph** 2.3sec **30-70mph in fourth** 3.9sec **0-62mph** 3.3sec

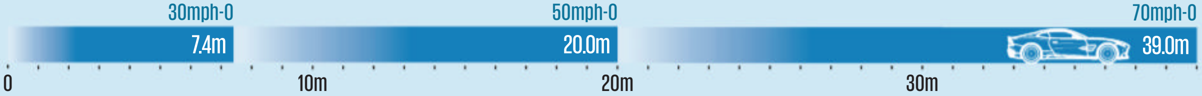


Bentley Continental GT Speed Hybrid (2025, 6deg C, dry)
Standing quarter mile 11.2sec at 129.2mph **Standing km** 20.1sec at 167.0mph **30-70mph** 2.5sec **30-70mph in fourth** 4.7sec **0-62mph** 3.2sec

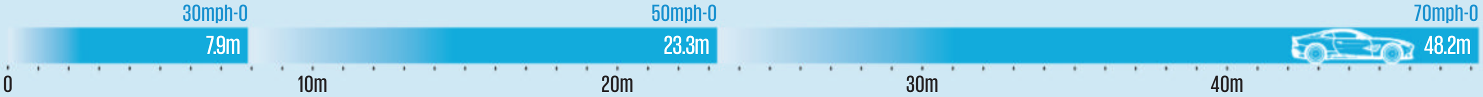


BRAKING

Dry 60-0mph 2.18sec



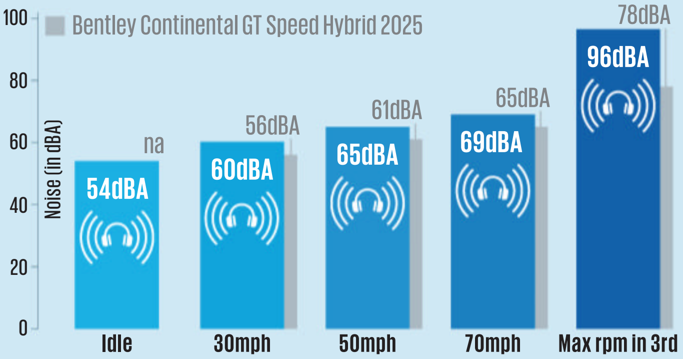
Wet 60-0mph 2.50sec



ACCELERATION IN GEAR

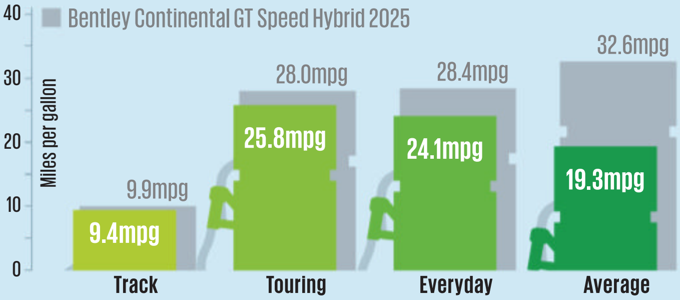
mph	Time (sec) 2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th
20-40	1.4	2.4	3.4				
30-50	1.1	2.4	2.3	3.7	8.0		
40-60	1.1	1.8	1.8	2.8	4.7	7.2	
50-70		1.6	1.6	2.2	3.8	6.0	11.4
60-80		1.7	1.6	2.0	3.1	5.0	9.8
70-90		1.8	1.7	2.1	2.8	4.1	8.5
80-100			1.7	2.2	2.9	3.8	7.2
90-110			1.9	2.3	3.0	3.9	6.2
100-120				2.3	3.2	4.2	5.9
110-130				2.6	3.4	3.4	6.4
120-140				2.8	3.6	3.6	
130-150				3.1	3.8	3.8	

CABIN NOISE



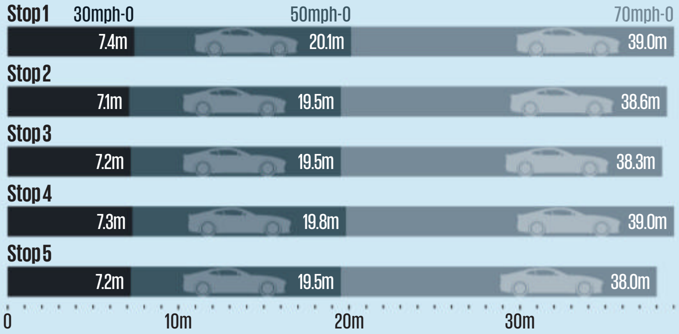
RUNNING EFFICIENCY

WLTP 20.7mpg (combined) **Test range** 348/465/435 miles (average/touring/everyday)



BRAKING ENDURANCE

Fade variance 70-0m – stop 1 vs stop 5: -1.0m



THE SMALL PRINT Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission. For information on the Vanquish, contact Customer Services, Aston Martin Lagonda, Banbury Road, Gaydon, Warwick, CV35 0DB (01926 644644, astonmartin.com).

PETER LIDDIARD

TESTERS' NOTES

RICHARD LANE
You can't take the same liberties with the Vanq as you can with the Vantage, but when it does come together on a cross-country charge, there's little else like it. I'm keen to try one with the bucket seats, for that added sense of connection.

MATT SAUNDERS
I recently saw a DBS 770 Ultimate with delivery miles for £307k. A hugely special car. That, or this newer one? Head says Vanquish, heart the 770. Both lovable.

SPEC ADVICE

The cabin gets warm with the panoramic roof and the carbon alternative saves weight too. Consider the carbon-backed Performance Seats. They look hardcore but in our experience are seriously comfy and result in a better driving position than the standard pews. For our money, a classic colour scheme never fails on a front-engined Aston. Spirit Silver paint with Sage leather would be our lottery-win combo.

FACELIFT FIXES

- Address the car's boot capacity and consider flattening the deck at the back of the cabin for even more storage space.
- Continue to hone the new infotainment system and improve the response of the capacitive controls on the steering wheel.
- Reintroduce a physical tacho dial. The digital one feels a touch low-rent in a machine as special as this one absolutely is.

RANKING RIVALS

1 ASTON MARTIN VANQUISH

LAMBORGHINI REVUELTO

£452,040

★★★★⯪

The quickest car we have ever road tested, with a standing-kilometre time that beats even the Bugatti Veyron Supersport – and everything else on this page, of course. The Lamborghini isn't anything like as easy to live with as the Aston but both cars are members of the dwindling V12 Club and the Revuelto's vastly improved usability over its predecessor, the Aventador, means it earns a place here. On which car would you choose to lavish your last gallon of super unleaded? It's too close to call. Aston verve or Lambo scream?

Engine V12, 6498cc, petrol, plus two electric motors and ISG
Layout Mid, longitudinal, 4WD
Power 1001bhp at 9520rpm
Torque 793lb ft at 6750rpm
Gearbox 8-spd dual-clutch automatic
Kerb weight 1892kg
0-62mph 2.5sec
Top speed More than 217mph
Economy 23.8mpg
CO_2 276g/km

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT SPEED

£236,600

★★★★☆

New-era Continental GT is endowed with a PHEV powertrain and in Speed guise nearly matches the output of the Aston's monumental V12. It's a heavier car, mind, and more concerned with luxury and soothing long-distance travel at the expense of explosive dynamism – something its rival from Gaydon has in abundance. These cars aren't really direct rivals, but the Bentley's versatility and price can't be ignored – though neither, for that matter, can its immense weight.

Engine V8, 3996cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol, plus electric motor
Layout Front, longitudinal, 4WD
Power 771bhp
Torque 738lb ft
Gearbox 8-spd dual-clutch automatic
Kerb weight 2459kg
0-62mph 3.2sec
Top speed 208mph
Economy 217.0mpg
CO_2 29g/km

MASERATI GRANTURISMO TROFEO

£163,590

★★★⯪☆

The Granturismo is an interesting data point when assessing the Vanquish. Half the cylinders, sure, but also half the price – and half the driving experience? Not at all. The latest long-snouted Maserati loses two cylinders compared with its forebear and gains front driveshafts, and it is a considerably more collected driver's car when you find yourself on the right road. It also has a bigger boot than the Aston, as well as back seats. Not slow, either, taking 3.6sec to 60mph on test.

Engine V6, 2992cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol
Layout Front, longitudinal, 4WD
Power 542bhp at 6500rpm
Torque 479lb ft at 3000rpm
Gearbox 8-spd automatic
Kerb weight 1795kg
0-62mph 3.5sec
Top speed 199mph
Economy 28.2mpg
CO_2 227g/km

McLAREN GTS

£179,260

★★★☆☆

A somewhat experimental attempt by McLaren to convert its much-admired supercar platform into a touring-suitable format. In 2019 it was a questionable approach, though the company's trademark lightness and an interesting solution regarding cargo space made the GT (as it was then) a palatable left-field option. These days, and even with 'S' enhancements to the powertrain and chassis, it feels out on a limb as a GT car. Accessibility is the main issue, and yet the GTS doesn't capitalise on its mid-engined layout.

Engine V8, 3994cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol
Layout Mid, longitudinal, RWD
Power 626bhp at 7500rpm
Torque 465lb ft at 5500-6500rpm
Gearbox 7-spd dual-clutch automatic
Kerb weight 1520kg
0-62mph 3.2sec
Top speed 203mph
Economy 23.7mpg
CO_2 270g/km

FERRARI 12CILINDRI

£336,500

Soon to undergo its very own road test, the Vanquish's arch-rival is a gentle paradigm shift for front-engined GT cars from Maranello, which for years had been on a trajectory of increased aggression and supercar-ness at the expense of grand touring ability. The 12Cilindri injects enviable road manners back into the mix but retains an atmo V12 and an indulgent handling balance, all with a dash of Daytona design. It's immensely desirable, and you have to imagine it set the tone for the Aston's ambitious pricing.

Engine V12, 6496cc, petrol
Layout Front, longitudinal, RWD
Power 819bhp at 9250rpm
Torque 500lb ft at 7250rpm
Gearbox 8-spd dual-clutch automatic
Dry weight 1560kg
0-62mph 2.9sec
Top speed 211mph
Economy 18.2mpg
CO_2 353g/km

VERDICT

Aston's blown V12 lives on in a devastatingly effective super-GT

★★★★½

The vivid return of the Vanquish puts Aston Martin's best-loved format into uncharted waters of price and – oh boy – power. This car has a stunning ability to explode forwards from seemingly any speed, in seemingly any gear. It also combines this speed with a cabin that's far friendlier and more digitally advanced than that of the DBS Superleggera it replaces. So too does the revised twin-turbo V12 find itself on sweeter form here than ever before: part thug, part aristocrat, it's a total joy. And yes, the Vanquish handles. Equally, there are questions that can be fairly asked. Given the car's broad remit, its epic scale and its cost, should technologies such as rear-steer and active anti-roll bars have had a role to play in enhancing its capabilities? Should the cockpit diverge more from that of lesser range-mates? Perhaps. Even so, this is a uniquely compelling super-GT.

V12
TWIN-TURBO

ALA
Insurance

GAP Insurance, Warranty,
Breakdown Cover and more.
For the just in case.

defaqto ★★★★★ Motor GAP Insurance 2025 EXPERT RATED

Trustpilot ★★★★★

Use code
AC10 for 10% off

ala.co.uk

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MATT SAUNDERS

Testing, testing

Would a fully electric GT be more refined than this hybrid? Maybe, maybe not

I've done plenty of very high speeds on Horiba MIRA's 'twin horizontal' straights, but rarely quite like this. The Bentley Continental GT Speed Hybrid that I recently road tested took me to the far side of 170mph several times, back and forth in opposite directions, all within the bounds of a measured mile, while simultaneously massaging my rather spoiled and considerable posterior. I didn't ask it to; I just forgot to turn that particular seat function off. And, well, there can't be many cars that could have done both.

The irony was that the optional massage seats weren't in fact switched on. Instead, I was experiencing what Crewe calls 'postural adjustment', fitted as standard and designed to relieve the load on your backside over a long journey.

You can read all about this latest Bentley in a six-page test in a few weeks' time. Suffice to say, for now, that the Continental GT Speed is indeed a worthy purveyor of the brand's inimitable and characteristically enveloping, cosseting, thunderously fast and pervasively special grand touring experience. All 2462kg and 772bhp of it, replete as the car is now with a V8-engined plug-in hybrid powertrain that should keep it relevant for years to come.

Our noise testing gear often produces surprising results

"I received 'postural adjustment' on the far side of 170mph"

And being a PHEV capable of electric-only running at one moment and then switching to the piston-powered kind within an instant, the next thing it made me wonder was: which is actually quieter?

Isn't the answer obvious? Ultimately, yes. But the size of the decisive margin might still surprise you. There is certainly a bit of a myth abroad that any car capable of electric running must be quieter and more refined than any that isn't and that EVs are all whisper-quiet. When you break out the noise meter and record what's actually going on, the truth turns out to be a fair bit more complicated.

All of Autocar's cabin noise testing is done on the MIRA mile straights – the same surface where our benchmark acceleration numbers are generated. So while the test conditions on the day can vary, we keep the input factors as constant as we can.

In the new Continental GT Speed, running at a steady 50mph with the engine off, the meter fluctuated around 61.7dBA – but then rose to only around 62.2dBA with the engine running. It's as confounding to read it again now as it was to observe it first hand, because your ears aren't lying to you. You can hear the instant the engine starts and easily perceive the difference it makes to the cabin's ambient noise level, even when it's only bumbling along just above idle – and then you look down at a meter that might as well be shrugging its shoulders and saying 'meh', like some uninterested adolescent.

The Continental GT Speed is a modern luxury car of particularly high standards for mechanical noise isolation, needless to say. In the average PHEV, we could probably expect a greater disparity. Nevertheless, in any car moving along at a 50mph cruising speed, the greatest individual source of detectable cabin noise usually isn't the engine, even when there is one fitted. Road noise and wind noise are already more prominent. And here are some numbers to prove it.

The Mercedes-Benz EQS is an exceptionally quiet car, for example, generating just 58dBA of cabin noise at 50mph, but that will have a lot more to do with the fact that it's a £130,000 luxury Mercedes than simply an electric car. At the same speed, Cupra's Tavascan EV is producing 61dBA of cabin noise – but so is the Dacia Duster Hybrid. The BMW 120 M Sport generates a very respectable 62dBA and the new petrol Audi S5 only 63dBA, yet the Kia EV6 and Audi Q6 E-tron – electric both – each generates 65dBA.

It's something to think about if you imagine that adopting an EV will automatically be something your eardrums will thank you for. They might – but only if you buy the right one.

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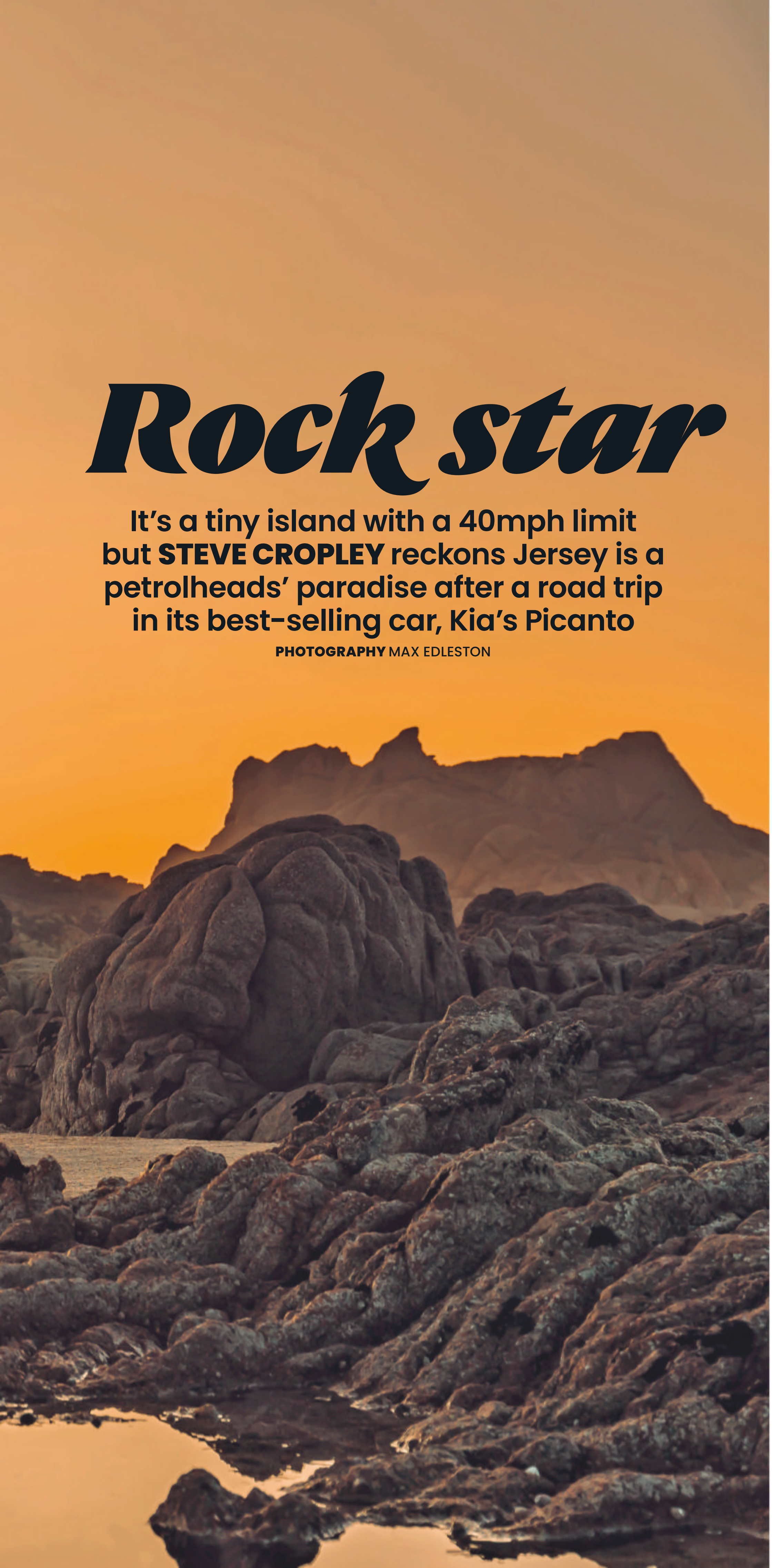


Rock star

It's a tiny island with a 40mph limit but **STEVE CROPLEY** reckons Jersey is a petrolheads' paradise after a road trip in its best-selling car, Kia's Picanto

PHOTOGRAPHY MAX EDLESTON

Not many people know this, said someone in the office, but the Kia Picanto is the best-selling car in Jersey.

This is hardly the kind of factoid that stops traffic, even traffic of a verbal kind, but it stuck around in our conversation because it soon became clear that various members of the Autocar community had been to Jersey, driving cars, and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. But how – the rest of us wondered – could you possibly enjoy driving in a place where the blanket speed limit is 40mph?

From that, one of those animated but pointless debates ensued. Jersey is only nine miles long and five miles wide, said the supporters. Its permanent population is 100,000, but 500,000 tourists go there every year because it's endlessly scenic. The roads are mostly twisty and narrow, and 40mph is often too much. The sceptics (including me) naturally demurred, and though our group discussion soon moved on, the controversy generated a plan: to get the hell over there, find a convenient Kia Picanto, and discover who was right...

We landed at Jersey airport in mid-March, following cheerful warnings from the BA copilot that the runway is shorter than most so the braking during the landing roll would be "a bit more energetic than usual". But even from the window of an Airbus A319, you could see that spring had begun, as it hadn't in the mainland, with advanced greenery on the trees and tentative flowers beginning to sprout from the verges. This was encouraging.

It turned out that my companion for the trip, cameraman Max Edleston, knew Jersey very well, having had a series of fondly remembered childhood holidays there. He even produced a happy-snap of himself as a teenager at a Jersey viewing point, Noirmont Point, using a camera for the very first time and realising, soon after, that it might present him with a career path. Going there would be one priority.

Straight off the plane, at around midday, we headed for the sunny, sandy south coast and Bel Royal, where Jersey's solitary Kia dealer – the place from which every one of those top-selling Picantos is delivered – was volunteering to lend us a demonstrator for 48 hours or so.

On the way, we called in at the Jersey War Tunnels, about a kilometre of them bored straight into towering surrounding hillsides by slave labour to house a hospital complex that was never completed. When we arrived, the place was still closed for the season (but about to open); it contains exhibits that "show what wartime life in Jersey was really like". Terrible, according to many accounts.

Bel Royal Motors, a friendly place owned ▸

Bel Royal Motors

Bel Royal Motors, established in 1926, is older than Kia

◂ by the same Le Marquand family for 99 years (and getting ready for centenary celebrations next year), is run by an enthusiastic general manager, Simon Mills, who put the kettle on and explained, while we sipped tea, why the Picanto does so well there.

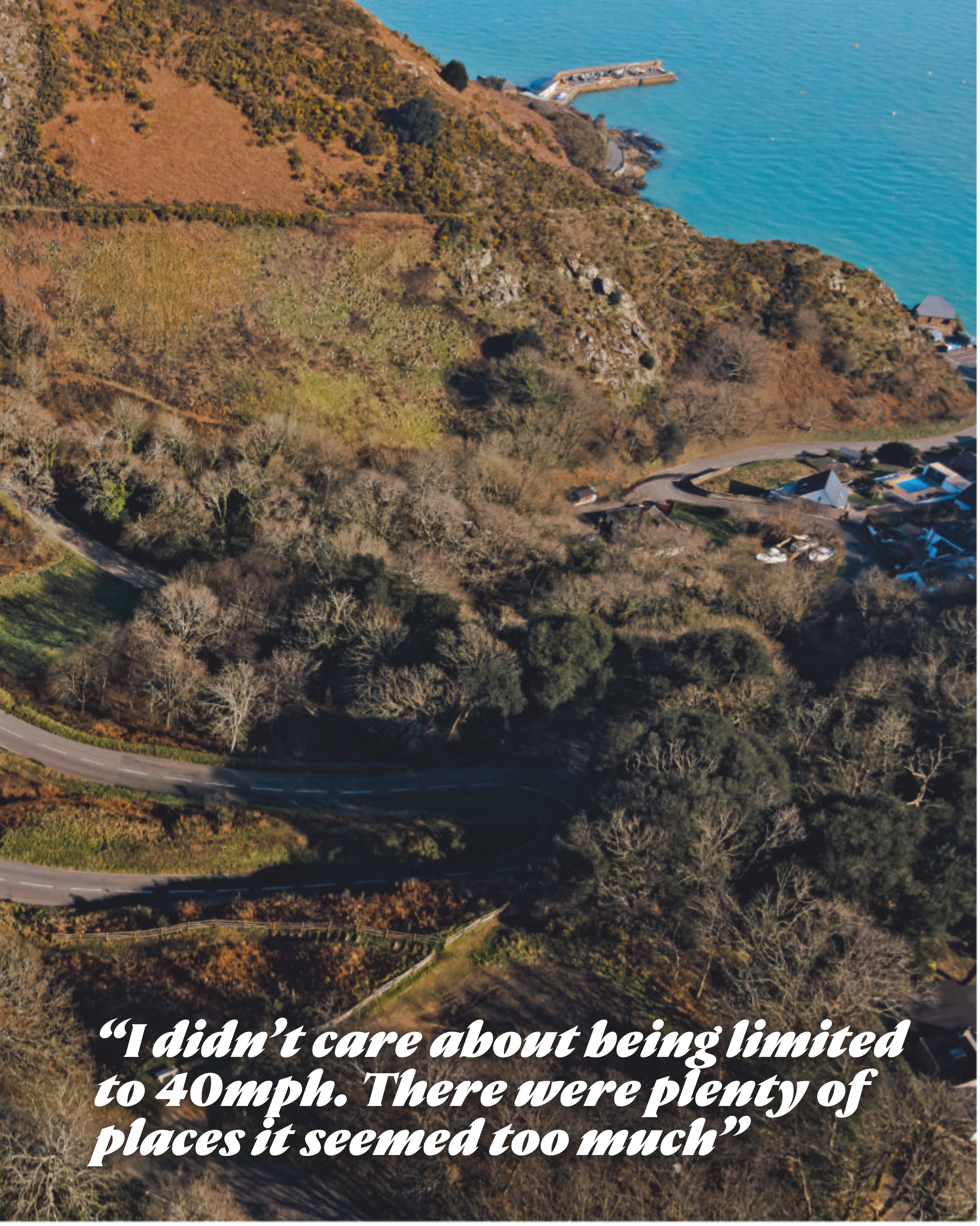
The narrow roads help, he said, and so does the fact that Ford killed the 47-year-old Fiesta back in 2023. But it was also clear to a visitor's eye that Bel Royal Motors' innate commercial energy and the Picanto's excellent price-to-equipment formula – plus the seven-year warranty – meant the little Kia appealed more to Jersey people than even the recently rejuvenated but notably fatter Renault Clio. That was a surprise, because French influence is everywhere in Jersey, and part of the secret of its better weather is that it nestles close to the French coast in the Gulf of Saint-Malo.

Our car was a top-spec, 600-mile Picanto GT-Line S, in Azure Blue (a £575 option), priced in Jersey at £17,512 and about the same in the rest of the UK. It comes complete with 77bhp 1.2-litre four-cylinder engine, which feels plenty strong enough for the job, even though the stopwatch does it no favours: 0-60mph in 13.1sec. Still, if you row it along with the endearingly slick five-speed gearbox – a very pleasant form of performance control that is becoming a rarity – you can go as fast as you need, while effortlessly returning 60mpg at Jersey speeds. As we eased our Picanto off the dealership's wide apron, there were Picantos used and new surrounding it, with various Sportages nearby (which are Kia's other big Jersey sellers).

Locals like Mills always know the latest about the tides, and photographers love coastal views: our discussion over tea had established that our first scenic destination needed to be Noirmont Point, Edleston's old stamping ground: a craggy and exposed southerly headland where the wartime Germans built, again with slave labour, an elaborate array of tunnels, turrets, admin blocks and gun emplacements because this is Jersey's southernmost point and Hitler was obsessed with turning it into an impregnable fortress. These days, all this reinforced concrete, made to last 1000 years, looks what it was, like an exercise in craziness. The sun shone warmly and the breeze played about us, but the pervading feeling was about the futility of it all.

Next was a westerly coastal trip of just three or four miles (everything's down the road in Jersey) to one of the island's longest coastal roads that runs the length of St Ouen's Bay on the western side, where we could taste the full 40mph and where the lowering sun lit the flanks of the blue Picanto a treat for photography. By now, I was clocking other cars: superminis and smaller were very commonplace. Pandas, Ignises, Aygos, 107s and their ilk were prevalent because of ▸

Cropley appreciated the well-appointed Picanto's smooth ride and wieldiness



"I didn't care about being limited to 40mph. There were plenty of places it seemed too much"

UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE BUY

While Jersey is technically a self-governing crown dependency, the sales success of the Kia Picanto there is a reminder that there's regional variation in the cars people buy. Does that apply to the whole UK?

The SMMT sales figures for the home nations in 2024 show that the Ford Puma and Kia Sportage – the two best-selling cars in the UK – were predictably popular everywhere, but there were interesting regional variations.

The Scots clearly love a Vauxhall Corsa, while MG is strong in Wales (the HS and ZS were the third- and fourth-best-sellers respectively).

Other quirks? Hyundai seems strong in Northern Ireland, with the Tucson third and the Kona fifth (and not cracking the top 10 elsewhere), while the only country to feature a BMW in its top 10 was Scotland, where the 1 Series sneaked into 10th.

But the starkest differential came in England: the Tesla Model Y and Nissan Juke were the third- and fourth-best-sellers but didn't appear in the top 10 of any other nation. Uneven EV infrastructure possibly explains the Model Y, but the Juke? Perhaps its Sunderland home. Or its 'edgy' styling only appeals to the English?

ENGLAND
1 Ford Puma (40,216)
2 Kia Sportage (38,998)
3 Nissan Qashqai (37,164)

NORTHERN IRELAND
1 Kia Sportage (1948)
2 Ford Puma (1394)
3 Hyundai Tucson (1299)

SCOTLAND
1 Vauxhall Corsa (6031)
2 Kia Sportage (5073)
3 Ford Puma (3899)

WALES
1 Ford Puma (2768)
2 Kia Sportage (2082)
3 MG HS (1534)

Jersey War Tunnels were built by local slave labour during Nazi occupation

Our Picanto felt brisk enough with its 77bhp 1.2-litre and manual 'box

Manx Loaghtan long-horn sheep are a rare breed, unlike the Kia Picanto

Picanto's LEDs don't have the range of the 1874 La Corbière lighthouse's beam

Our two Jersey boys find Jersey cows and Jersey Royals

Boats can be as integral to daily life as cars in Jersey

◀ the relatively narrow and twisting roads (and especially the blind bends), though there was the usual contingent of drive-to-school SUVs, always to be feared on bends. I was soon finding that I didn't care at all about being limited to 40mph. In fact, there were plenty of places where it was allowed but seemed a bit too much.

Max being Max, he'd already called the maritime authorities, including the coastguard, to get permission to drive the Picanto onto a long, restricted causeway leading to the stately 1874 La Corbière lighthouse on the island's south-western extremity. It stands 119ft above the highest spring tide, is the first-ever British lighthouse built in concrete, has already saved many hundreds of vessels from disaster and is still in action.

However, it also leads land-side tourists into temptation, because the tide moves fast and it's easy to get cut off when it rises. On our particular late afternoon, the photographically desirable sunset coincided with the threatening high tide: we were pleasantly warned about it by the remarkably helpful authorities, who gave us more credit for a modicum of intelligence than authorities usually do. Sun set, tide avoided, we repaired to a beachside restaurant (featuring its own Citroën Ami) for a hearty dinner, before rolling into St Helier on the south coast (yep, just a few miles away) to our accommodation.

The next day was a flurry of visits orchestrated by Max, who was determined we'd touch every extremity. First to a St Helier coffee shop that was one of his old haunts (the traffic was busy but not frantic) and then off to the modest northerly place, Ronez Point, where there's a rather bizarre kart track that's part of the public road when not in use. On the mainland, you'd expect such a place to be busy at any time, but it was deserted so we did a couple of stately laps, having a care for Bel Royal's pristine demo.

By now, I was settling into the Picanto, whose latest restyle I really like, and which was proving to be a sweet and ideal companion. It's a good-riding and relatively quiet car with lots of equipment (for me, steering wheel heating is the acid test of equipment depth) and a pervading

> **"The Picanto is one of those cars you just know would be able to serve you well for many years"**

Small cars are a good fit for the winding, narrow lanes here

UND THE WORLD COFFEES

JERSEY LOVES MOTORSPORT

Despite that 40mph speed limit, there's plenty of enthusiasm for speed sport on Jersey – and the same, incidentally, goes for its Channel Islands twin, Guernsey.

Jersey's Motorcycle and Light Club has a whole programme of hillclimb events at the spectacular Bouley Bay course we found (and drove) on our Picanto tour. However, this year's motoring showpiece will be JIMF (Jersey International Motoring Festival), held from 5-8 June this year. It starts with a sunset rolling road show in St Helier on Thursday night and follows with a seafront sprint on Friday, a hillclimb through the streets on Saturday and a grand finale plus more track action on the Sunday. Find more information about it at jimf.je.

JERSEY INTERNATIONAL MOTORING FESTIVAL

impression of great materials and impeccable quality. This is one of those cars you just know would be able to serve you for many years.

We'd been tasked by the office to find and photograph two extremely cheesy Jersey icons – some Jersey Royals spuds and some Jersey dairy cows – and on that mission we found one of several hotbeds of Jersey's busy motorsport scene, the mighty Bouley Bay hillclimb course (public roads again) at Trinity that rises from the coast through the trees to a steep summit. It looks great: if not committed, there are few things I'd rather do than to go back there for the Easter meeting on 21 April.

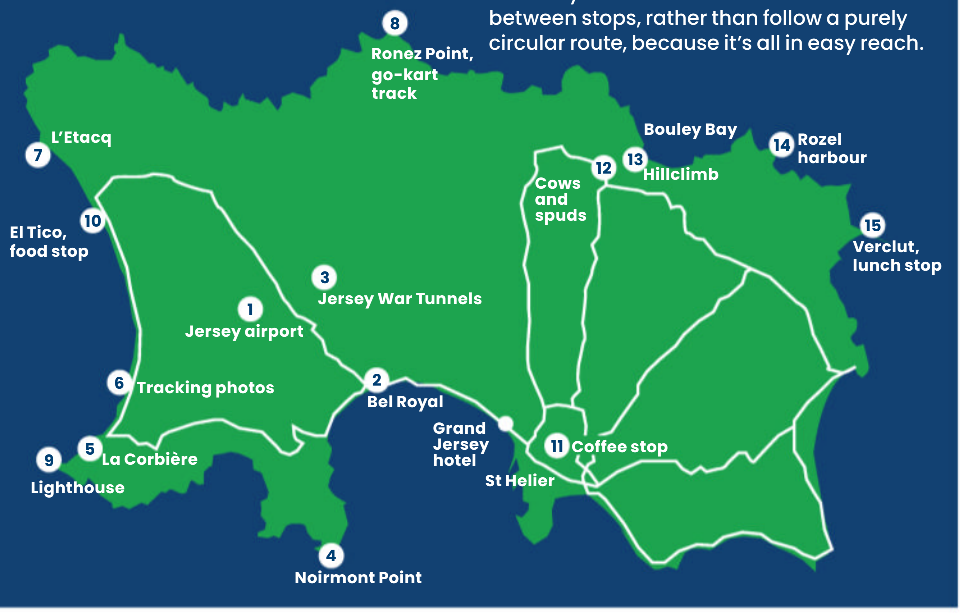
Miraculously, we found the spuds and cows together in one location just south of Bouley Bay: a roadside stall selling Jersey Royals in large bags (too big for the hand luggage) overlooked by a platoon of the friendliest and prettiest cows going. Max snapped busily until it dawned on us that a bit more north-easterly coastal touring was necessary – through successions of enticing stopping places before we could say we'd completed the circumnavigation. Then it was time to get back to Bel Royal Motors and to the airport for our late-afternoon flight.

Back at the dealership, Mills had dug out period pictures of some very high-tone 1950s sports cars racing past the corner location of his premises, with spectators using the roof for a grandstand. One impression that stands out is that on Jersey they love cars and motorsport (the occurrence of Porsches is said to be denser there than anywhere else) whatever that 40mph limit may imply to outsiders.

Max and I came to the conclusion that three-quarters of the time, and especially in a touristic summer, a Porsche would have been a bind for what we were doing. Carrying bulky camera bags (or any other kind), squeezing into beauty-point car parks and nipping safely along narrow roads around hundreds of blind bends was more a job for our Kia Picanto. It was very close to perfect. Let's hope the coming crop of low-priced EVs arrives quickly enough for the Jersey drivers who will need them. Over there, especially, big is not beautiful. A

Our route

Jersey is only five miles long and nine miles wide so you can criss-cross the island between stops, rather than follow a purely circular route, because it's all in easy reach.



COSWORTH
GMA.2 V12

The art of combustion

Cosworth faded from popular view for a while but is now back at the forefront, designing soul-stirring engines for the most exciting new hypercars. **FELIX PAGE** pays a visit

PHOTOGRAPHY JACK HARRISON

Features such as this so often open with a somewhat clichéd remark about the incongruousness of the drab surroundings from which the renowned company under the spotlight operates.

True to form, we find the headquarters of one of Britain's best-known and most influential automotive engineering outfits nestled between the garages and warehouses of Northampton's sprawling St James Industrial Estate. Head to the right of Jewsons and around the Royal Mail sorting office to find the main office entrance, and then up and under the West Coast mainline and past the MOT centre for the factory itself. This small and unassuming complex of buildings forms what could undramatically be described as the epicentre of Britain's motorsport and performance car engineering heritage.

The history of Cosworth Engineering is so intrinsically connected with that of British sports cars that you have to wonder what today's car world would look like had founders Mike Costin and Keith Duckworth never formed a relationship while working at Colin Chapman's fledgling Lotus Engineering outfit in the late 1950s. From humble beginnings in grassroots motorsport, the pair evolved their business into a leading engine supplier for top-flight motorsport series, famously creating the most successful engine in the history of Formula 1, the DFV V8. The business would go on to put its name to some of the most revered and influential performance cars of the late 20th century: Fords Escort and Sierra, Mercedes-Benz 190E, Audi RS4, Subaru Impreza...

The list goes on, and today the company counts in its portfolio some of the most powerful and expensive road cars currently in production: the likes of Bugatti, Aston Martin and Gordon Murray have all turned to the storied outfit for a new generation of mammoth-capacity motors.

Commercial director Chris Willoughby has been at Cosworth for 34 years, first as an engineer in the F1 powertrain division – what he calls a "golden era", during which he worked with legends including Senna and Schumacher. Now he oversees a team that builds some of today's biggest and most beautiful road car engines. While the remit has changed dramatically, the ethos has not, and Willoughby says the pit lane mentality remains absolutely central to Cosworth's success. "I can see parallels between that really successful racing era and where we are now with the hypercars," he says. Primarily this is reflected in how self-contained and agile the business still is – a characteristic fostered by its involvement in those halcyon days of F1, when engineering innovation and rapid reaction times were utterly crucial to supremacy.

Chris Willoughby (right) talks engines with Page

"All of our customers today want shorter and shorter programmes, so we're very focused on that," continues Willoughby. "But being vertically integrated is very much who we still are. An interesting parallel with the DFV is that we made getting on for 1000 of them, and if you look at some of the car programmes we're working on now, we're certainly going to be into the many hundreds of engines. Creating a clean-sheet design, developing and then manufacturing it in quantity – that was our business model back then, and that's our business model now."

What's different about Cosworth's output now, though, is that the engines are so much more than mere tools used in the pursuit of racing success. Rather, they are upheld as mechanical marvels in themselves, ones that are central to the appeal – and ultra-exclusive billing – of the cars in which they are mounted.

"There's an appreciation of the engines and vehicles almost like they are pieces of art," says Willoughby.

"They're appreciated in the same way – even the aesthetic of the engines and what they look like is very important. And I think there's a growing interest in what the engines are technically beneath the skin.

"People are blown away when they see a piston or a crankshaft, or the oil cooling squirt jets... All those things – there seems to be a real appetite for that now." Willoughby echoes the sentiments of Bugatti-Rimac CEO Mate Rimac, who said recently that demand for the ludicrously quick Nevera hypercar was flagging as the world's highest-net-worth individuals were being drawn by the heightened analogue appeal of its combustion-engined contemporaries. That his new Cosworth V16-powered Bugatti hypercar is named Tourbillon – after a tiny and highly intricate mechanism that's usually on display in expensive watches – is no coincidence.

It is largely because of the enduring allure of a mechanical combustion engine – with all of its pulleys, belts, plugs and bangs – that Cosworth is still designing and producing enormous 12- and 16-cylinder engines, and all of this while the more mainstream sectors of the automotive industry scrabble to downsize and decarbonise. But there are also more rational technical considerations to bear in mind.

Today, the viability of using batteries in such high-performance cars as the Valkyrie and T50 is limited, because the energy density "is not there", says Willoughby. "They will progress and get better, but doing 10 laps of the Nürburgring seems like a long way off.

"If you want to do 10 laps in a car that weighs 1000kg and has desirable dynamic qualities to it, then an engine is still very much the tool to use."

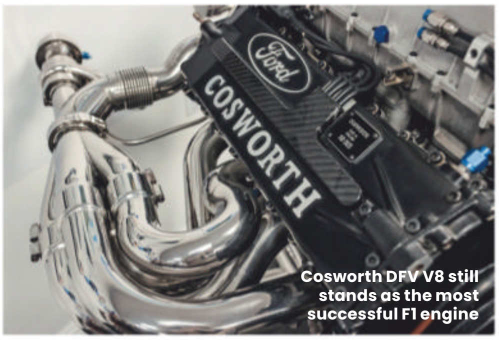
Hence Cosworth's exploration of alternative means of fuelling the internal combustion process. The study has yielded promising results, lending further weight to the growing argument that banning engines themselves – rather than the highly polluting substances that currently make them spin – is a misguided enterprise.

Willoughby adds: "We've been running synthetic fuels for four or five years, and the chemists say it's exactly the same as gasoline. Sure enough, when we put it in an engine, we can't tell the difference." ▸

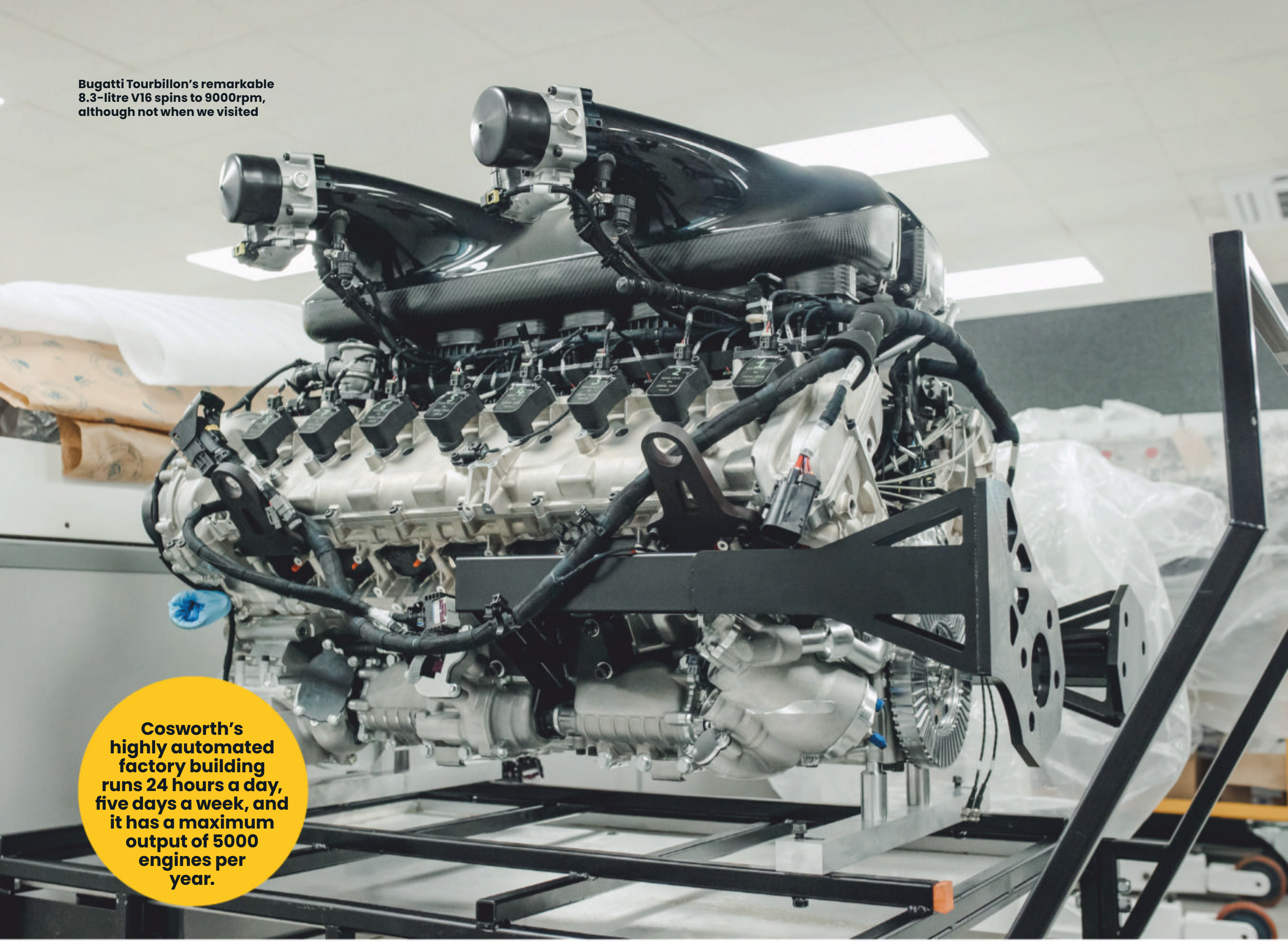
Cosworth's next hypercar engine is a screaming atmo V10 for Red Bull's RB17. It will redline at 15,000rpm and enable 217mph but has been designed for a lifespan of more than 15,000 miles.

Engine timeline reveals Cosworth Engineering's influence in motorsport

Gordon Murray T50 uses Cosworth-developed V12



Cosworth DFV V8 still stands as the most successful F1 engine



Bugatti Tourbillon's remarkable 8.3-litre V16 spins to 9000rpm, although not when we visited

Cosworth's highly automated factory building runs 24 hours a day, five days a week, and it has a maximum output of 5000 engines per year.

He acknowledges that production of synthetic fuels is currently highly limited, and thus it is prohibitively expensive for use in a mainstream context. "But for our type of applications," he says – referring to the £3.2 million Tourbillon and £2.8 million T50, for example – "the price is less likely to be a limiting factor." The fact that racing at the Goodwood Revival is now powered by e-fuels, and that F1 is on track to follow suit in 2026, is representative of the opportunity at hand to decarbonise those enthusiast-facing sectors of the automotive world that simply can't – at least yet – feasibly switch to battery power.

In one of Cosworth's 10 top-secret dyno suites, one engine has been rigged up to burn hydrogen. Willoughby says it has also shown promise as an alternative fuel because of its propensity to burn over a wide air-fuel ratio range and produce comparable power outputs to petrol. Dampening its appeal over purpose-designed synthetic fuels, though, is that it requires around 10 times more storage space in the car and produces water, which "all ends up somewhere", necessitating extensive moisture-capture modifications – as demonstrated by the labyrinthine pipework twisting its way up from the manifold of this block into the vents on the ceiling.

The primary inhibitors to adopting hydrogen for use in combustion engines are not so much the technical limitations but rather the crucial developments that can't be achieved within the confines of a Northampton workshop. "The adoption of hydrogen depends on lots of things outside of our control," says Willoughby, "like the development of infrastructure and supply." Even if this is not a technology that has a place in today's world, it may well be needed in the future – and Cosworth will be ready to take to the front of the grid, in figurative terms, when it is.

Cosworth-powered Tourbillon will be a Chiron successor

Cosworth's efforts at combustion-engine preservation are far from a wilful nose-thumbing of the rules and regulations that will bring about the eventual demise of fossil-fuelled powerplants; instead, they come in recognition of the fact that even the very highest echelons of the automotive market will be forced to adapt to new technologies as part of a clean-up act that will safeguard their future. It's just not entirely clear when that will be, at least for now.

The fact that we're looking at an engine that burns hydrogen does not mean Cosworth has any immediate plans to commercialise this technology, but rather it serves as testament to the company's ruthless commitment to being prepared for any eventuality.

"We need to know how to react to changes in the market," explains Willoughby. "We have to be a bit diversified and understand how our skillset maps into the market, and where it has value." As he speaks, Willoughby is forced to raise his voice over the deafening growl of a Gordon Murray V12 that's running in the adjacent test bay – a neat metaphor for Cosworth's eggs-in-many-baskets approach.

Small wonder that the people responsible for these screaming mechanical marvels should be exploring ways of keeping their crankshafts spinning into the future. From the dark and deafening confines of the test benches that are little changed since the company's early days, we are ushered down a hallway to the final assembly suite, which is comparatively blinding in its surgical spotlessness and lays bare the scale, significance and splendour of Cosworth's latest generation of combustion engines.

Perhaps it's the relative mundanity of its

> **"The resulting soundtracks can be enjoyed by anyone within earshot"**

ICE power is all part of the appeal of rarefied cars such as the Aston Martin Valkyrie

surroundings that so emphasises the ludicrous proportions of Bugatti's new V16, but you get the sense that this is a powerplant conceived to draw the eye organically even when removed from the multimillion-pound missile in which it will be mounted. Even if you have only the vaguest inkling of which bit does what in an engine, there is pleasure to be drawn from the granite-hewn quality of the components used here, the attention to detail in linking them all together and the sheer size of what they constitute when they are united.

This 8.3-litre lump is so colossal that you don't so much casually glance around it as embark upon a lap of it: comparisons with the likes of the Rolls-Royce Merlin and the Beast of Turin's flame-spitting 28-litre motor feel more than appropriate.

Our request to fire the engine up in situ is wrongly assumed to be a joke and laughed off, but videos from testing confirm that it sounds about as biblically cataclysmic as you would expect: guttural and booming, with a baritone bark that spirals upwards in pitch as it approaches its 9000rpm redline. As it accelerates away from the camera, it sounds almost like two Mercedes-Benz SLR McLarens having a drag race. "Hopefully we can keep it soft limiter-free," said Mate Rimac recently. Quite.

Willoughby says this aural drama was a prerequisite of Bugatti's V16 programme, which was good news for a company whose co-founder Duckworth is quoted as saying: "Turbos are for people who can't build engines." Here at Cosworth, they like their engine aspiration natural, their revs high and their exhaust notes shrieking.

Willoughby, surprisingly perhaps, drives an electric car himself, and says they are "absolutely the right answer" in mainstream applications. But in the sort of rarefied air that Tourbillon, Valkyrie and T50 owners breathe, there is still a huge demand for analogue viscerality and evocative authenticity that can only be provided by a free-breathing, huge-capacity petrol engine. And while very, very few of us will ever have the opportunity to take one of these automotive artworks up through the rev range ourselves, the resulting soundtracks can at least be enjoyed by anyone within earshot.

At the 1994 Spanish Grand Prix, Michael Schumacher's Cosworth-engined Benetton was stuck in fifth gear for 20 laps, but he still brought it home in second place without stalling. "That's how flexible our engines were," beams Willoughby.

"The thing that's surprised me is how well received the sound of a naturally aspirated engine is," admits Willoughby. "I think that's deep-rooted in the human psyche in some way. I'm not a psychologist, but I think it's hard-coded from when tigers used to jump out on us from behind bushes – we're coded to have a response to noise."

There's rather less poetic licence in that analogy than you might think. When the probing jaw of the Aston Martin Valkyrie emerged from behind the hay bales at the Goodwood hillclimb's first corner last year and its deafening exhaust note – more than reminiscent of a 1990s F1 car – began to reverberate ominously around West Sussex, the stunned, respectful silence that fell on the Festival of Speed grandstands was testament to the emotional power still wielded by a properly fettled combustion engine.

This roar, though, unlike a tiger's, attracts a crowd rather than dispels it – but it is also similarly endangered and risks being silenced without the efforts of dedicated preservationists. Happily, there's a group of highly skilled and ruthlessly committed engineers in the East Midlands, working hard to ensure it remains unstifled for many years to come.

THE DOCTOR WILL SEE YOU NOW

An orthopedic surgeon-turned-high-level automotive deal-broker and part-time racer, Cosworth CEO Dr Florian Kamelger was connected with the firm through his work selling Aston Martins, and he played a role in bringing the two companies together at the beginning of the Valkyrie programme.

He hails the Swiss watch-like analogue appeal of a Cosworth engine (in contrast to the do-it-all functionality of a smartwatch) as central to the company's ongoing success. "Luxury is everything you desperately want but don't really need," he says, suggesting this can remain a calling card well into the future.

"We've realised over the past couple of years that the political ambition to put a deadline where all fossil fuels have to be banned and where all internal combustion engines will be gone doesn't work. This is too much of an influence into the market from the political side."

Does he think the industry will move completely away from fossil fuels at some point? "Most likely," replies Kamelger. "Will there be something which will replace those in our world? Yes, I think so. Will we be able to adjust to the changing environment in the market over time? Of course we will. We always have."

Cosworth's engines are already prepared to run on synthetic fuels, he says, and the cars that they power are driven only short distances by their wealthy owners, so an estimated price of €4.5-5 per litre is "quite affordable".

He adds: "I think it will be a question of logistics and of accessibility, and on both of those we have ideas for our customers. We can help in solving that."

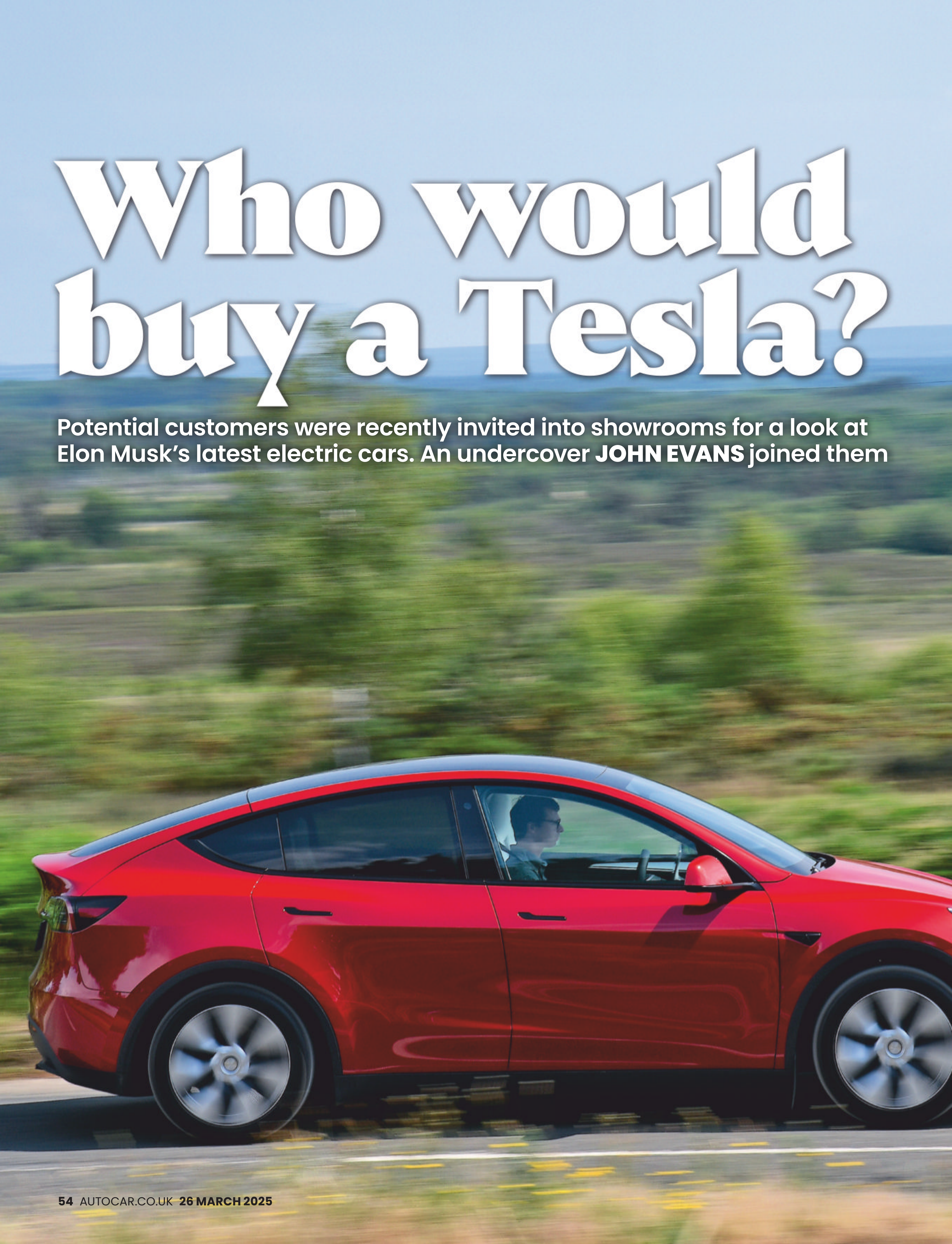
Whatever happens, Kamelger says Cosworth has "an obligation" to decarbonise, and "the end customer wants us to do that". So adapt it must, but one thing is certain: even if it emits no greenhouse gases, Cosworth engines will be emitting raucous soundtracks well into the future.

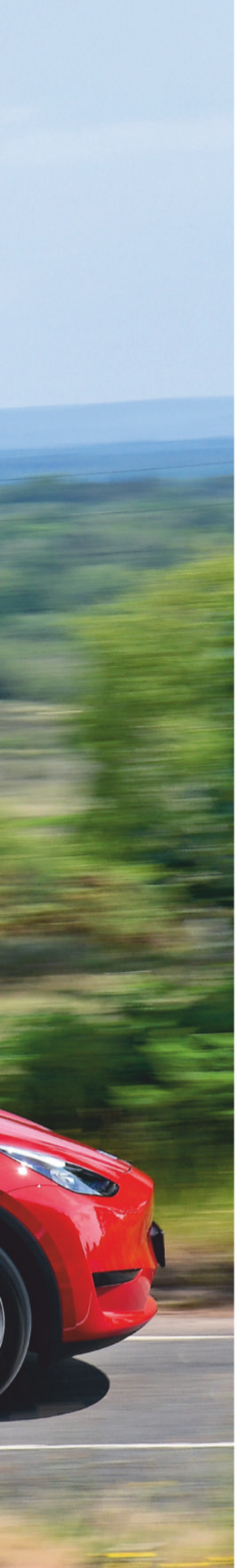
"I don't envisage Cosworth doing a fully electric powertrain," he says. "A 12-cylinder which revs to 12,000rpm is the emotion, and the battery does not really contribute to the emotion."

Cosworth CEO Kamelger (left) is confident about the company's future

Who would buy a Tesla?

Potential customers were recently invited into showrooms for a look at Elon Musk's latest electric cars. An undercover **JOHN EVANS** joined them





Love 'em or hate 'em (and that may be shaped largely by your view of Elon Musk), Tesla EVs are a common sight on the roads these days. And with a facelifted Model Y currently being rolled out and some catching up to do in the sales charts, Tesla recently invited potential customers to visit its showrooms to try some of its models.

I must once have recorded my details with my local Tesla dealer because I too received an invitation. It sounded like a good opportunity to go undercover to see how the company sells cars and meet both those pondering their first EV and seasoned drivers thinking of switching brands.

EVs made up 19.6% of car sales last year, according to the SMMT. That figure was up a fifth on 2023 but still short of the 22% demanded by the zero-emissions vehicle mandate. Through 2024, Tesla's year-to-date market share dipped too, but by the end of the year its overall market share was just about up (by 1.54%) – and the Model Y was the UK's fifth-most-popular car.

Anyway, invitation in hand, a few months back I duly turned up at Tesla Guildford ready to play the clueless punter. A sales advisor quickly earned my attention with a Morrisons cake and a Nespresso coffee before matching me to a new, long-range Model 3. On personal contract hire with maintenance and an annual mileage cap of 10,000 miles, it would, he said, cost me £374 per month over three years with a 12-month (£4488) down payment. Too much? There was the standard-range car for £324 per month instead, but few were available. "It's almost sold out, with fresh supplies not arriving for a few months," he told me. "The deal may have changed by then, too. Take a long-range Model 3 for a test drive and think it over."

After a turn around the block and back at the showroom, my first conversation was with a chap considering a Model 3. His company car, a Volkswagen Passat GTE estate, is about to be returned, and he thought he'd go electric to save tax. "I've driven a BYD Seal but it felt too Chinese and had more conventional instruments than the Tesla," he said. "If you're going to have an EV, it has to be a Tesla for its quality, performance and charging network."

Next back at the showroom is the test driver of a Model Y. "I run an Audi Q4 E-tron as a company car," he said. "It's great, but it causes me range and charger anxiety. Service station charge points are often so busy that I'm forced to wait ages. Also, sometimes when I've gone to use a Tesla Supercharger, it's an older generation that won't charge my car.

While Tesla's sales have risen in the UK, the latest figures from across Europe show a fall of 10% for the brand.

Musk's divisive political posturing seems to have affected Tesla's sales

"Fortunately, my Audi is fitted with the optional heat pump, so I can warm the interior without affecting the car's range. Colleagues who don't have one get far fewer miles, and to avoid running out of range completely they drive in a hat and coat. Now that our company is offering a car allowance, they're switching to Teslas not only for range and charging reasons but also because Teslas have a heat pump as standard. I'll be following them."

Another chap was preparing to leave in his Volvo XC60. "The Volvo costs me £150 per month in company car tax, whereas a Model Y will cost me £50," he said. "It's a no-brainer. I drive 200 miles a day for work, so the Tesla's range and ease of charging is another bonus."

I just squeezed in a last chat with a couple and their children fresh from a drive of a Model Y, as they transferred all of their family paraphernalia back to their Audi Q5. "My wife can get an electric car on salary sacrifice," said her husband. "With Audi dealers offering to buy our car for £20,000 [it's a 2018-reg with 50,000 miles], we're thinking that now's the time to change."

By this point, a steady flow of visitors was arriving at the showroom. "It's going to be a busy weekend," an advisor told me. "Fortunately, the cars sell themselves." To business users, yes, certainly they do…

Could Tesla regard its nationwide showroom event a success? Despite dire warnings of the possible threat to sales posed by Elon Musk's recent political posturings, in February Tesla's sales rose by more than a fifth when compared with the same month last year. Admittedly, the whole EV market was up almost 42% year on year, driven by buyers rushing to sign up before April when, for the first time, EVs will be liable for road tax.

However, the company can take heart from the fact that against stiff competition, the Model 3 and Model Y secured second and third places in the month's top 10 new car sales chart. I can't claim to have contributed to that success, but I reckon I know one or two people who did. A

Test Drive
Available

Tesla test drive event proved popular, mostly with business users

GETTY IMAGES

LIVING WITH A...

Where our long-term test cars have been and what they've done

"The straight-six engine is a belter and a real highlight"

FINAL REPORT **MILEAGE 4390**

MERCEDES-AMG CLE

Did this old-school coupé worm its way under our skin? Let's find out

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To generate a progress report on the evolution of the high-tech yet traditional Mercedes-AMG coupé

When the CLE was first announced, it sounded like just another new Mercedes to fill yet another specialist niche.

However, quite the opposite has proved to be true: the CLE has allowed for a rationalisation of several Mercedes models, while still feeling both special and unique from anything else in the range.

The CLE strikes me as one of the purest and most feelgood models the three-pointed star makes today. Not only has progress on the old-school Mercedes-Benz coupé been good, then, but the CLE also feels like it's among the best of them.

The CLE has a more classical style, but the shiny newness of its badge meant I often found myself explaining exactly what type of Mercedes this was. You hear 'C' at the start of its name and instinctively think of something smaller, while the 'E' suggests a larger car – and a CL was about as big as Mercs got back in the day. And no, it's not a CLK.

So you could read those three letters several different ways. In essence, the CLE replaces the C-Class, E-Class and S-Class coupés and cabriolets all at once. Mercedes has pitched it somewhere around the E-Class and S-Class models in size and positioning, rather than go after more volume. It was a good call: rarity only adds to the appeal.

Yet the sense of occasion was over and above that of all those 'Class'-suffixed models and came close to supercar levels. This thing turned heads, and plenty of them. The CLE generated the most interest of any car I've run this side of McLaren's 650S, and even that didn't foster as much positivity pound for pound.

Perhaps that's because the Mercedes feels more relatable, more achievable; that's the mark of a good brand that has created a level of aspiration even as it has spread down into other markets.

The CLE is a good example of a reversal of a wider trend at Mercedes. Its models now seem to have been developed with a bit more thought put into what they're about and why you would buy them, and there's clear, distinct positioning between models, rather than them overlapping or tripping over something else in the range.

The design is a triumph, and the CLE is perhaps the best-looking car Mercedes makes. The Gorden Wagener-shaped design theme has stuck for well over a decade, and while some of the volume Mercs suffer from a touch of VW Golf-itis, making it hard to tell one generation from another, the CLE shows Mercedes' design and proportions at their very best.

SECOND OPINION

Usually, you get a good sense of a car from your first moments behind the wheel. But not with the CLE 53. On my first encounter it felt too big, too firm and too cold. But its many charms soon become apparent. By the end of my first weekend with it, I didn't want to hand the keys back. **JA**

Can you tell that I quite liked this car? It was certainly love at first sight, but that didn't extend to the way it drove. The CLE felt vast from behind the wheel, more so than its dimensions (4.85 metres long, 1.94 metres wide) suggest. It took some getting used to, and you were only ever a tight city street or narrow B-road away from having to breathe in.

Comfortable cabin, but the driving position is a little on the high side

Head-turning looks and confusing badge drew lots of attention from passers-by

Plethora of physical controls took a fair bit of getting used to

Pothole signalled the end of one of the CLE's Michelin Pilot Sports

The large, 20in alloys sat well outside the bodywork, too, and I kerbed them – twice. It's a sickening feeling, and I pride myself on taking care behind the wheel and being a good judge of dimensions, but I met my match in the CLE.

Road tester Illya Verpraet went further by taking out the nearside front 265/35 R20 Michelin, although this was due to a pothole. Still, it demonstrated the wheels' vulnerability. In a previous report (Autocar, 12 February) we said there was suspension and wheel damage as a result of this incident, but we're happy to clarify this wasn't the case: only the tyre was replaced and the nearside alloys were refurbished.

You sit high and far back in the CLE. It's quite an unusual driving position and took some getting used to. The interior, while comfortable and richly appointed, was pretty baffling, too, with some big screens along with lots of buttons and different control inputs, and I never truly felt like I had learned my way around. The thumb-wipe buttons on the steering wheel were particularly odd, and I fell out with the 'Hey Mercedes' voice control more than once. "Hey Mercedes, where's the swear jar?"

Then there were the driving modes, switchable through two dials on the steering wheel, one of which adjusts the powertrain and liberates more performance, while the other stiffens the chassis. There were real, noticeable differences between the settings, far more than is typical. I liked Comfort on the motorway and Sport on a B-road. That might not sound like a revelation, but too often I find driving modes are gimmicky, and simply making a car feel slower in one direction or too uncomfortable in another. The CLE has plenty of different characters to explore.

Character is the key word for this car: it has bags of it. Even the foibles are part of its charm; this is a car you have to get to know in order to understand it, and then you can really enjoy and exploit it. It can just as easily play the role of big, comfortable cruiser or B-road weapon, with its four-wheel steering giving a level of agility that something so big shouldn't have.

For now, the CLE range is topped by the 53 AMG version we ran. This does without the V8 (or four-cylinder hybrid…) of 63-badged AMGs but is no slouch itself. The straight-six engine is a belter and a real highlight. It's not at the level of drama of a Mercedes V8, but it isn't trying to be that. In this context it feels more akin to a downscaled Bentley: big on torque and refinement, and the power and performance is a by-product of that.

A smaller Bentley: that's a good way of looking at the CLE, both for its sense of occasion and for how special it makes even the most mundane trips feel. More of this please, Mercedes.

MARK TISSHAW

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
mark.tisshaw@haymarket.com

TEST DATA

MERCEDES-AMG CLE 53 4MATIC+ COUPE NIGHT EDITION PREMIUM PLUS

MILEAGE

At start 1420
At end 4390

PRICES

List price new £78,825
List price now £78,825
Price as tested £81,445

OPTIONS

Alpine Grey solid paint £925, Driving Assistance Package Plus £1695

ECONOMY AND RANGE

Claimed economy 29.4mpg
Fuel tank 66 litres
Test average 28.1mpg
Test best 31.2mpg
Test worst 20.1mpg
Real-world range 408 miles

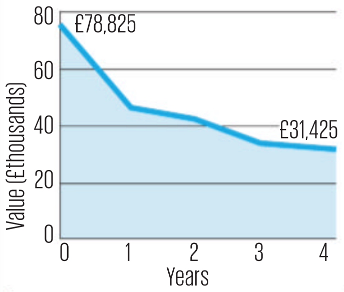
TECH HIGHLIGHTS

0-62mph 4.2sec
Top speed 155mph
Engine 6 cyls in line, 2999cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol, plus 48V ISG
Max power 443bhp at 5800-6100rpm
Max torque 413lb ft at 2200-2500rpm
Gearbox 9-spd automatic, 4WD
Boot 240 litres
Wheels 9.5Jx20in (f), 11.0Jx20in (r), alloy
Tyres 265/35 R20 (f), 295/30 R20 (r), Michelin Pilot Sport S5
Kerb weight 2000kg

SERVICE AND RUNNING COSTS

Contract hire rate £1145 pcm
CO_2 217g/km
Service costs None
Other costs New tyre £322.67
Fuel costs £672.42
Running costs including fuel £995.09
Cost per mile 34 pence
Faults None

DEPRECIATION



PREVIOUS REPORTS

20 Nov 2024, 4/11 Dec, 15 Jan 2025, 22 Jan, 12 Feb, 12 Mar, 19 Mar

LOVE IT

CHASSIS TECH
There's extraordinary bandwidth in the AMG Ride Control to alter the dynamic character. It's complicated but worth the effort.

EYE-CATCHING LOOKS
This doesn't feel like a golden age for German premium car design, yet the CLE is a definite exception to the rule.

PREMIUM AUDIO
The Burmester 3D surround system is incredible. Your ears are so spoiled that inferior sound systems become irritating.

LOATHE IT

DRIVING POSITION
I would happily sit an inch or two lower than its lowest setting, to feel closer to the road.

SOUNDTRACK
The 53 AMG looks far more like a 63 AMG than a standard Merc, but it doesn't sound like one. A few pops and crackles from the exhaust would be welcome.

FIRST REPORT

SUZUKI SWIFT

Fourth-generation take on a pint-sized old favourite joins the fleet

WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT To see if the latest incarnation of Suzuki's supermini has maintained its trademark no-frills appeal

If there was one adjective to describe the vast majority of contemporary cars, it would surely be 'overcomplicated' – with 'big', 'heavy' and 'expensive' jostling for position not far behind.

There are myriad reasons for this – safety regulations and consumer buying trends among them – and they've been discussed at great length before. But the long and the short of it is that there are relatively few small, light cars compared with 15 years ago. In fact, if you leave out featherweight track specials from firms such as Radical, Caterham and GMA, or quadricycles such as the Citroën Ami or Mobilize Duo, there are just five sub-tonne cars on sale today: the Toyota Aygo X, the Dacia Spring, Hyundai and Kia's i10 and Picanto siblings, and this, the 984kg Suzuki Swift.

It's easy to forget just how long the Swift name has been on the UK scene. We first heard it in 1984 as the export name for the Suzuki Cultus, a three-cylinder, ultra-low-cost hatchback. The model proved to be an immediate hit, being sold all over the world under no fewer than nine different names, and in 1988 it was replaced by a second-generation model that took the nameplate all the way through to 2003.

The Swift as we know it today was revealed a year later. It differed somewhat from its predecessor not only by being more concerned with presenting itself as a sporty, stylish supermini rather than simply the most accessible form of motoring around, but also by focusing its aim squarely on Europe. Four-cylinder engines replaced the rough three-pots of the previous generation and it sat on an all-new, albeit heavier, chassis – and we loved it.

With its exceptionally well-balanced mix of ride comfort and cheekiness, the Swift managed always to be among the more fun hatches. But it felt just as well

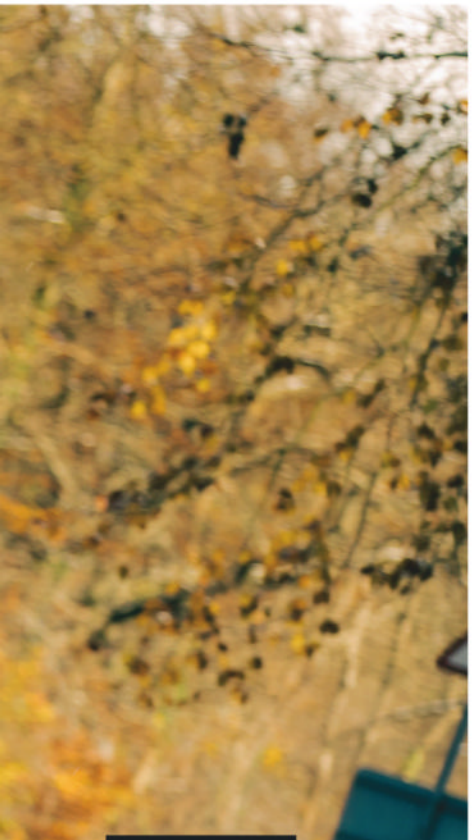
The interior majors on practical functionality over indulgent opulence

Stiff platform and low weight mean the Swift is agile and fun to drive

The Swift's performance isn't scintillating, but it is impressively frugal

Well-weighted steering and manual gearbox ramp up the entertainment

Central screen is nicely positioned, but you get lots of analogue controls too



"From a purely emotional perspective, the gearbox is a thing of beauty"

screwed together as anything else, which marked a serious step forward for Suzuki.

The Swift got better as time went on, with the introduction of all-wheel drive and continuous updates, and 2010's second-gen car was even better than the first. In 2016, the third-generation Swift moved to the stiffer and lighter Heartect platform, which cut weight by more than 100kg despite the three-door option being dropped and the car growing slightly overall.

That's the platform on which this new fourth-generation car sits, hence the low weight, but more has changed than you might think. The first thing you notice is the styling, which is sleeker than before despite a somewhat blobby grille. Suzuki says drag has been reduced by 4.6% compared with the previous model, so it's clearly there for a reason.

Behind that lovable (but somewhat deep-sea-fish-mouthy) face is a new engine, with Suzuki having reverted back to a three-cylinder formula. It's a little 1.2-litre unit, but unlike most engines of a similar size, this one hasn't had a turbo bolted on. It relies instead on a fantastically high compression ratio of 13:1 to produce power. Not that there's a lot of it, mind you: just 82bhp all the way up at 5700rpm, with peak torque of 83lb ft coming in at 4500rpm.

That's not to say that it's completely unassisted, though, because there's also a 12V hybrid system that's about as mild as a chicken korma. It's more or less a glorified starter motor that very occasionally gives a tiny boost to the sweet little three-cylinder up front.

A 0-62mph time of 12.5sec isn't as swift as the badge might lead you to expect, but you'll have a fun time getting up there thanks to a proper 1990s throwback in the form of a five-speed manual gearbox.

It's one of very few cars still fitted with one, and it's a real peach of a thing with a fairly short throw and a smooth but precise shift. I'd probably go as far as to say it's among the best gearboxes fitted to anything on sale, making its equivalents from Vauxhall and Volkswagen feel like you're stirring soup in comparison.

We'll see how much I'm waxing lyrical about it when I'm stuck in the sub-walking-pace traffic that is the bane of the manual gearbox user's existence, but from a purely emotional perspective, the gearbox is a thing of beauty.

The gearbox goes hand in hand with the Swift's light but stiff chassis and reassuringly weighty steering, all of which make it a hoot to drive. It serves a more sensible purpose, too: with light weight comes low fuel consumption. Suzuki claims an impressive average figure of 64.2mpg, which makes sense when you consider how little weight there is to push around. Light cars, eh? They'll never catch on.

On initial impressions, the Swift feels reassuringly solid despite that 984kg weight – a figure I keep mentioning because I almost can't believe it in this day and age.

Another wonderfully simple part of the Swift is the model hierarchy. There are just two trims to choose from: Motion, the base spec we have here, or Ultra. The former has pretty much everything you would ever need, such as heated seats, cruise control and a reversing camera.

The interior is best described as sparse but comfortable, with a well-sized and well-placed screen in the centre, a bit less road noise than some other small hatches and a delightfully old-school manual air-conditioning system – not to mention some actual physical dials on the dashboard.

It's so basic yet so charming. Once I work out how to turn off the ADAS, I think I'll be in danger of getting too attached to this tiny treat.

JACK HARRISON

TEST DATA

SUZUKI SWIFT 1.2 MILD HYBRID MOTION

Price new £19,899 **Price as tested** £20,599 **Options** Burning Red metallic paint £700 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Economy** 64.2mpg (WLTP)

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE
jack.harrison@haymarket.com

SECOND OPINION

I'm actually feeling quite jealous. How pleasant it is to step down into a small, well-packaged and affordable car that has compact proportions, three pedals and a good helping of useful kit, like Apple CarPlay and cruise control. Jack covers a lot of miles, so it will be interesting to see if this fun little runaround will keep him satisfied on a long schlep along the motorway. **SP**

SNAPSHOTS

AUDI A3

Mileage 2573 **Last seen** 12.3.25
I don't use as many steering wheel controls as a motoring journalist perhaps should. But the A3 has a button that I probably use more than any other in the car: the mute button. Every time my son speaks from the back, I mute then unmute the radio. It's simple yet practical. The alternative in many cars is to touch a button multiple times, which is far more onerous, especially when concentrating on the road. **RB**

MAZDA MX-5

Mileage 6174 **Last seen** 19.3.25
Why won't Mazda let me use the touchscreen while I'm driving? There are hundreds upon hundreds of other people wondering – and discussing it online. Aftermarket suppliers are even offering solutions. The obvious answer is 'safety'. But flicking between Google Maps and Spotify on the rotary controller is at least 10 clicks, whereas with the touchscreen it's only three prods. **MSc**

TESLA MODEL 3

Mileage 37,921 **Last seen** 19.3.25
The Model 3 is a conventional saloon – so not ideal for dogs. Luckily, Tesla does a neat water-resistant pet liner for the back seat. It's not cheap, at £132, but it's well designed, with headrest loops to secure it, a soft fleece finish and Velcro panels to access the seatbelts for his harness. Clip-in door protectors are a nice touch, too. **AC**

USED CARS
HOW TO BUY A
PORSCHE PANAMERA

WHEN PORSCHE MADE THE FOUR-SEAT GT GREAT AGAIN

Need epic performance and long-distance luxury? Then look no further

Anyone on the hunt for a luxurious four-seat grand tourer will surely have the Porsche Panamera high on their list of potential buys – if not right at the top. This is a striking super-saloon that is almost peerless in its ability to blend blistering pace with stunning dynamics and cosseting high-end refinement.

The first-generation Panamera is looking like great value these days – if you can overlook its flaws. It was extremely fast and good to drive, but it didn't quite clear the high bar set by rivals such as the Audi RS7 and BMW M5 due to a clumsy ride and tricky hatchback boot. Instead, we would recommend forking out for the more stylish and sophisticated second-generation '971' version: a bona fide greatest hit from Weissach, and one that can be yours for as little as £30,000.

If you're not already taken by the comfort, space, speed and versatility on offer, you will certainly be hooked by the diverse range of petrol, diesel and hybrid powertrains that are available.

Of the petrols, there's the 325bhp 3.0-litre Panamera (available with four-wheel drive), the 4S with a twin-turbocharged 2.9-litre V6 and the 456bhp plug-in E-Hybrid, which enhances that punchier V6 with a useful boost from an electric motor. The PHEV is one of the most accessible versions today, but it is just as compelling for the fact that it can do 0-62mph in 4.6sec and 31 miles on electric power – although not at the same time.

Up top, the Turbo S E-Hybrid has a 542bhp twin-turbo V8 and

Panamera's cabin blends the brand's sporty style with cosseting luxury

a 134bhp electric motor for a combined 671bhp (that's more than a Maserati MC20), for a blisteringly quick 0-62mph time of 3.5sec – and it still has a 31-mile EV range. That said, it's a bit too heavy to offer the same sweet sporting balance as its siblings, and a well-used example will cost you around £50,000.

We wouldn't bother with the V8 GTS variant: it's seriously fast and dynamically competent but a bit too stiff-legged to fulfil the luxury saloon/GT brief.

If you're after an oil-burner then the 4S Diesel is a very tempting package. With 416bhp and 627lb ft from its mighty twin-turbo V8, it can accelerate rapidly, but it also makes for effortless cruising. It's a refined lump but still has a gritty V8 edge, and you'll get close to 40mpg on motorway stints.

All flavours of Panamera are lavishly appointed, with tactile metal brightwork and plush materials throughout. The 12.3in touchscreen (with sat-nav and DAB radio) is intuitive and easy to use, but the haptic buttons in the centre console are a bit fiddly. Head and leg room are good, and despite its rakish roofline, taller passengers won't want for space in the back.

If you need an extra layer of practicality, the Sport Turismo 'estate' is the one to go for: a tidy 45k-mile V6 hybrid example will cost you around £50,000.

The facelift in 2021 brought styling tweaks and uplifts in power to various models, but if we were to pick one from that lot it would be the Turbo S. It makes 621bhp and is a true do-it-all luxury Porsche, with bucketloads of performance plus agile, incisive handling and impressive ride comfort.

Engine and bodystyle aside, the Mk2 Panamera is a brilliant luxury GT car that can be exuberant and fun but also calm and assured, while putting you right at the centre of the action. From £30k, it's a bargain you might regret missing.

SAM PHILLIPS

What we said then

1 FEBRUARY 2017

"The new Panamera's success is in its ability to wipe away any reservations about what it is via the sheer breadth and brilliance of all it does. In the 4S Diesel in particular, Weissach has a car that's astonishingly complete for a modern GT. Fast, tactile, smooth, easy to drive, poised, engaging, comfortable, spacious and long-legged – its versatility is incredible."

Despite its size, the Panamera delivers pin-sharp dynamics

"The 4S Diesel is a tempting package with a gritty V8 edge, and you'll get close to 40mpg"

How to get one in your garage

AN OWNER'S VIEW

ANDREW PALMER

"I've owned four Panameras, among most alternatives, like BMW M5s and Audi RS6s – my current one being a 2023 Turbo S E-Hybrid. The Panamera is the best all-around car I've come across and I'd describe its defining characteristic as composure: it makes every competitor seem too harsh or busy or too soft; you can sense its Bentley GT underpinnings. The driving position is tremendous and the PDK gearbox is snappy and smooth. Road noise is quite loud because of the wide tyres, and I've had a few issues with the climate controls. Listen out for a rattle from the panoramic roof and creaky front suspension."

BUYER BEWARE...

■ GEARBOX

Take a long test drive to run the car up through the gears. Rough shifting, jerkiness or a delay in the engagement of a gear could spell issues with the PDK automatic 'box. The cause can vary (internal sensor, control module, clutch).

■ SUSPENSION

Be wary of any car fitted with air suspension. Any leaks can cause it to sag or sit lower than normal. Faulty air compressors can also cause the suspension to inflate or deflate infrequently. Other things to watch out for are a broken height sensor, blocked valves or a busted control module. Just one new air strut can exceed £1000.

■ ENGINE

A drop in coolant level or engine overheating could mean that the coolant expansion tank or water pump has failed. A new water pump can cost between £200 and £350. Overheating at idle is typically caused by a broken auxiliary coolant pump. A new one costs between £70 and £200.

■ ELECTRICS

A frozen infotainment system, screen or audio malfunction are all common examples of electrical and software gremlins. Updating the car's software regularly can prevent this.

■ DRIVE BATTERY

The battery in a hybrid model can wear over time. If buying a high-mileage car, check the EV range against its official claimed figure.

■ BODY

Make sure the rear spoiler moves as it should. Its actuators can

fail, preventing it from raising at the defined vehicle speed. A replacement wing can cost around £1400.

ALSO WORTH KNOWING

You can take your Panamera to your nearest Porsche dealer for a 111-point inspection of its exterior, interior, engine and more, and if it passes, you will be able to buy a Porsche Approved Warranty.

Service and maintenance costs are high, especially if you go via a main dealer. A 60,000-mile or six-year service can cost around £2000-£3000.

HOW MUCH TO SPEND

£30,000-£41,999

Early, very well-used examples with plenty of miles. You can find a tidy car with reasonable miles but are tied to the V6 models.

£42,000-£53,999

A broad mix of V6 and V8 models with reasonable to low mileages. You will easily find a one-owner, full-service-history car here.

£54,000-£65,999

Mileage varies here so shop around. A few more Sport Turismo estates available and higher-mileage post-facelift cars.

£66,000-£77,999

Newer Turbo S E-Hybrid and GTS Panameras. Mileage varies but many well-maintained facelifted cars.

£78,000 AND ABOVE

Immaculate, low-mileage V8 Hybrid and GTS cars. Dealer only.

ONE WE FOUND

PORSCHE PANAMERA 4S DIESEL, 2017, 38,000 MILES, £43,480

This diesel is in great condition. It's packed full of kit, such as adaptive air suspension and Bose surround sound, and that thumping V8 has oodles of grunt yet also agreeable economy.

My car & I

Fulvia triggers a flood of memories

Love is… replacing your old Lancia Fulvia that was written off in a flood with another. Back in 2011 in Brisbane, Australia, Angus Sinclair woke one morning to a terrifying storm, which, he found out later, had claimed his beloved Fulvia. "I brought it with me and the family when I moved to Australia for work," he says. "We hired a 40-foot shipping container; the back half filled with the contents of our home and the front half for the Fulvia. There's was no way we were going to leave it behind; it held too many memories." Following the biblical storm, the car was under water for three days. Angus bought what remained of it from the insurance company and, reluctantly, sold it. "Amazingly, its new owner restored it, and it's back on the road in Australia," he says.

Eventually the Sinclairs returned to Britain, where a desire to replace the drowned Fulvia with another took hold. Three years ago, he found just the car: a rare Series 1 Fulvia 1.3 Rallye, registered in 1968 and with 60,000 miles on the clock. Angus says: "It was at a classic car dealer in Bicester and in much better condition than my old one had been before the flood. We had to have it!"

The 'Rallye' part of the model's name reflects the Fulvia's successful

Our cars

Panda earns a reprieve – for now

BY CHARLIE MARTIN

I'm starting to suspect the Mean Machine – that's my Fiat Panda 100HP – might be sentient.

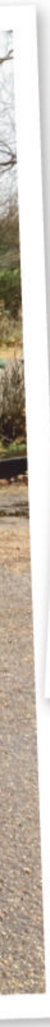
Not long after I'd had a grand old moan about the Panda's starter motor, a remarkably clean example of a Renault Clio RS 182 came up for sale. It's a car I've wanted for yonks and the numbers just about made sense, and it all felt like the stars were aligning to give me a way of moving on.

I'd just started organising all of the paperwork in preparation for a part-exchange when the dealer asked for a 10% deposit – oh, and it would be non-refundable. When they then said they couldn't send a picture of the Clio's underside, alarm bells started ringing. I slept on it, only for someone else to beat me to reserving the car. C'est la vie, and probably for the best.

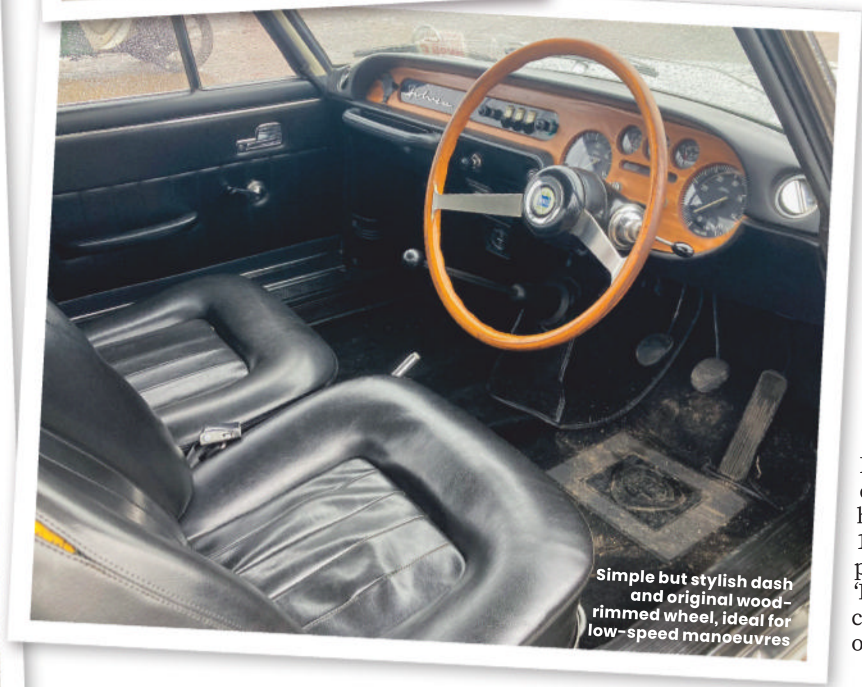
Here's the odd bit: the following day, the Panda returned to working completely normally, minus the start-up sneezing noise. I thought perhaps it was down to the weather – an unusually warm winter's morning – but the problem hasn't returned. It's almost as if the car is apologising and begging for another chance.

So I'll be holding onto it for a while longer. I'm still shopping for alternatives: my quarter-life crisis approaches and a proper sports car would be nice. In the meantime, however, I've booked the Panda in for an inspection with a renowned specialist. More on that next time.

Martin's Fiat Panda has seen the error of its ways and got its act together



From far left: discreet badges at the back; Rallye-spec 1.3-litre V4 makes 90bhp



Simple but stylish dash and original wood-rimmed wheel, ideal for low-speed manoeuvres

"Like most thoroughbreds of its time, there's magic in the details"

competition record during the 1960s and '70s, including winning the International Rally Championship, the forerunner of the WRC. Even in standard form, a version like Angus's has the makings of a winner: front-wheel drive and powered by a 1.3-litre V4 with twin carburettors to produce an impressive 90bhp, it is, says Angus, a delight to drive, being nimble and comfortable with light but accurate steering. The car has disc brakes all round, too.

Although it's his second Fulvia, Angus claims not to be much of a DIYer. He says: "I leave that to the garage." In any case, other than general consumables, he's not sure where he'd get spare parts from. Fortunately, it was in near-perfect condition when he bought it: "It's sure to have some rust somewhere but, touch wood, whatever it has can't be as bad as my old Fulvia. A mechanic once told me that both of its front subframes had rusted to the extent that they were held on only by the two bolts resting in their holes – the nuts securing them had rotted away. I'd driven at 90mph in that car!" Being made of aluminium, at least his current car's bonnet, boot and doors should be safe from the dreaded tin worm.

Like most thoroughbred cars of its time, there's magic in the Fulvia's details, from the spindly chrome wiper arms and door handles to the discreet blue 'rallye 1.3' badge on the grille. Most pleasing of all is the model name 'Fulvia rallye 1.3' picked out in chrome on the rear and 'Fulvia' on the passenger side of the dash.

The interior is dominated by a gorgeous wood-rimmed steering wheel. "Many people have replaced theirs with a smaller Momo wheel," says Angus, "but this original one is a work of art and large enough that it helps to take some of the effort out of turning the wheel at low speeds."

To my amazement, Angus is driving the Fulvia on the weekend a major storm hits the UK. Fingers crossed that he manages to avoid the floods that are forecast…

JOHN EVANS

Head to head

DANNY DAVIES

2020 RENAULT ZOE GT LINE 52KWH

VS

SAM PHILLIPS

2022 CITROEN AMI

Brief: Find an electric car with sub-10k miles for £10,000

SP A base-spec Citroën Ami with steelies and just 2k miles showing: what more could you want for urban jaunts and school runs? It's a bargain, too, at just £4995. Sure, a Zoe is more practical, but it's not half as quirky or fun. Chevrons: one. Diamonds: nil.

DD The Ami is super – if you want to drive around in what looks like an unpainted Little Tikes coupé. Your legs could take you farther than the Ami's real-world range, and walking would probably be more luxurious anyway. Instead, I give you this Renault Zoe: just in budget, at £9950, 9000 miles young and with four times the driving range.

SP Little Tikes? At least my Ami has got some character. That Zoe may have been ahead of its time, but it's a pretty drab way of getting around. My Ami is fun, nippy and totally fit for purpose. I'll concede its range is short, but it was never designed to be driven to Scotland. It's the king of the urban jungle.

DD The only purpose for which the Ami is fit is looking exactly the same from the front as it does from the back. Now I will confess that the Zoe isn't exactly the most exciting choice, but at least it doesn't look like it's going to topple over.

SP Well, there is one thing we can agree on: you can buy a cheap EV that hasn't been to the moon and back.

CAUGHT IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

FIAT 124 SPORT COUPE CC 1800 TWIN-CAM

1976, 64,000 miles, £17,995

Four-seat Italian coupés don't get much cooler than this 124 Coupé. Abarth alloys and a sports exhaust enhance its looks and sound, and it has just had a £4000 service at a specialist, with lots of new parts.

ALFA ROMEO GT 1300 JUNIOR

1968, 100,000 miles, £22,995

This rare right-hand-drive 1300 Junior looks a bit tatty but has an MOT and has been cared for by the same owner for 35 years. Mechanically it is in good order, with a lengthy list of new parts including a fuel tank and exhaust system, plus rebuilt carbs. Tax and ULEZ exempt, too.

BMW 2002

1973, 57,000 miles, £29,995

Garage-stored for more than 30 years, this 2002 has been fully restored and looks immaculate. Upgrades include LED lights, meatier brakes and a new stereo with smartphone mirroring. It wants for nothing and is said to drive without fault.

TRIUMPH GT6

1972, 36,000 miles, £14,000

This low-mile, reasonably priced Mk3 GT6 is said to "drive great" and have "lots of power". It even has Spax adjustable dampers, refurbished wheels with new tyres and several new parts, and it's fully serviced.

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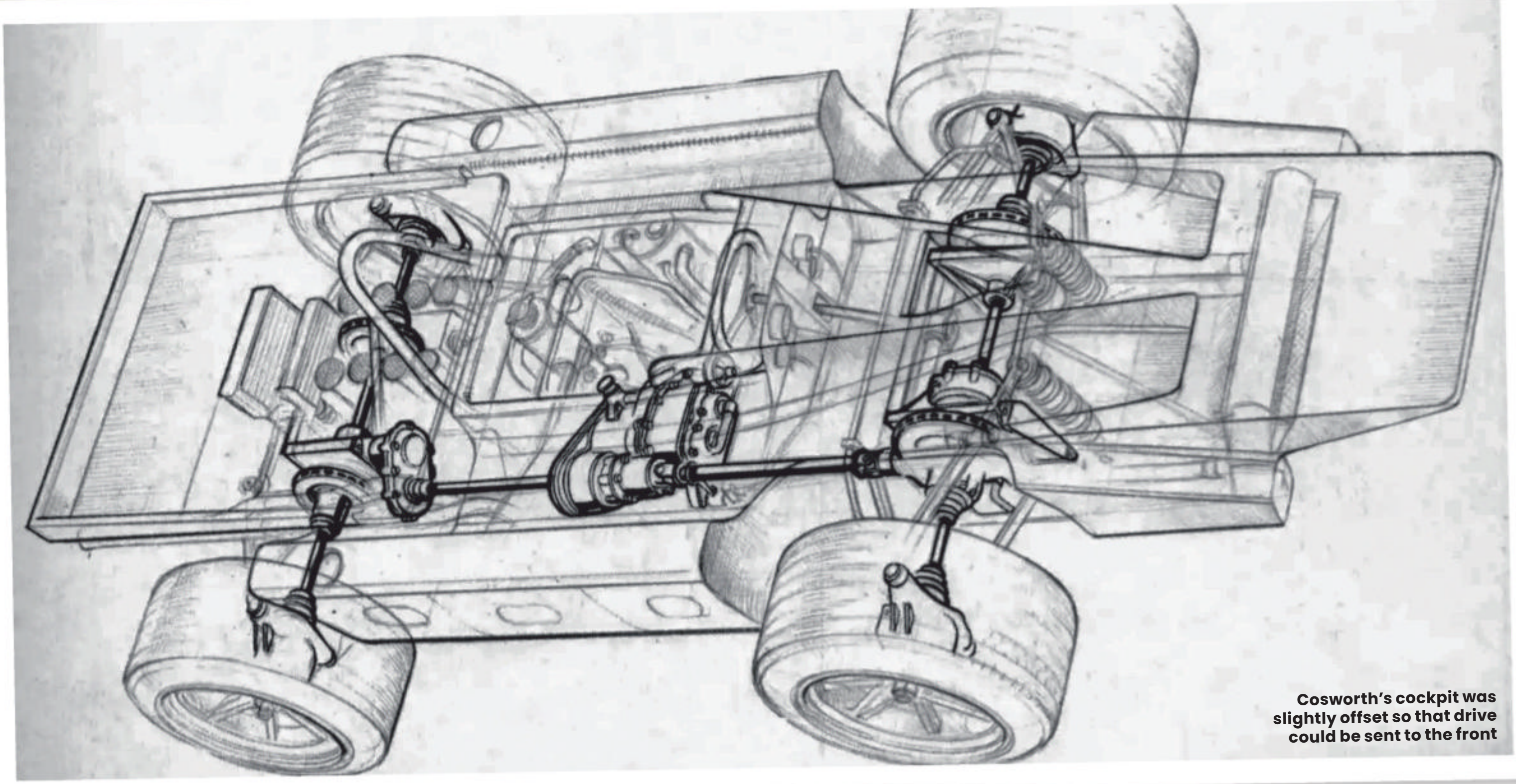

Cosworth's cockpit was slightly offset so that drive could be sent to the front

Cosworth builds its own F1 car – with 4WD

Cosworth became famous the world over in the late 1960s as its Ford-funded 'DFV' V8 engine totally dominated Formula 1 – something it would continue to do throughout the 1970s. In fact, its final grand prix win didn't come until 1983. It's one of the most admirable of the many 'blokes in a shed beat all the car industry giants' stories Britain produced in the last century. It's not well known, though, that Cosworth at this time created not only its own F1 engine but its own F1 car – and a highly unconventional one at that.

This unnamed racer was dreamed up by Cosworth co-founders Mike Costin and Keith Duckworth, both former Lotus engineers, and Robin Herd, who started his career as a design engineer on Concorde, and then designed McLaren's first-ever grand prix winner.

"It is something entirely new in single-seater aerodynamics, structure and the detail arrangement of the transmission," we reported on its July 1969 unveiling.

The Cosworth was far from alone in using four-wheel drive. The potential of a 4WD system had been shown as long ago as 1961, when Stirling Moss had won a non-championship race in an F1 car created by British tractor company Ferguson (which had then in 1966 contributed the first 4WD system for a road car, the Jensen FF), and it was an obvious solution when F1 engines became so powerful (with more than 400bhp) that cars started to struggle to put it all down.

Lotus had seemed to prove the theory by almost winning the 1969 Indianapolis 500 with a gas-turbine 4WD car, and Matra's Jackie Stewart told us: "There isn't a tail slide and there isn't a lot of understeer; you can balance the car much better and therefore you can get out of corners quicker, and if you do that, you get down the straights quicker."

"The most attractive 4WD F1 car" – which is saying something!

Lotus 63 finished a race only twice in nine attempts

Working on 4WD were Cosworth, BRM, Lotus, Matra, McLaren and Ferrari. Most integrated Ferguson's proven system into existing chassis, but Northampton went its own way.

We reported: "Drive is taken from the engine, which is installed with the flywheel end forward, to a two-shaft gearbox with Hewland gears to give a wide choice of ratios. An extra gear, mounted on the end of the second motion shaft, takes the drive sideways to an angled bevel differential from which it is taken to the front and rear final drives. The torque-split ratio is likely to be about 40:60 front to rear, with further adjustment possible by altering front and rear wheel diameters.

"The rear drive passes under the right-hand cylinder bank of the engine and is then taken sideways across the back of the engine by a pair of spur wheels, suitably cased, to the rear differential.

"The front driveshaft – which, like the rear, is a solid shaft with Hooke joints – is taken through a guard tube directly to the front differential, side-step gears being unnecessary [here].

"Two points in the layout of this drive stand out. One is that by arranging the fore-and-aft drive lines on the right-hand side of the car (Lotus and McLaren have theirs on the left), it has been possible to eliminate an idler wheel between the gearbox and the centre differential. This is necessary in the other designs to match the rotation of the engine and transmission. The other is that it is believed that free differentials, without anti-spin mechanisms, are used in the front and rear final drives as well as in the centre differential."

Lotus entered its 4WD 63 at Zandvoort – but not with its lead driver Jochen Rindt at the wheel, as he hated it so much in testing that he refused to race it! Also in that race was Matra's 4WD MS80, later labelled by a driver simply as "undrivable". And after racing his own team's 4WD M9A at Silverstone, Bruce McLaren apparently said it was like "signing your name with someone pushing your hand along". Little wonder, then, that Cosworth's 4WD contender never graced a grid.

"4WD in F1 has been something of an anti-climax," we concluded in August 1969, and bar a single 1971 appearance of an experimental Lotus powered by a gas turbine, it has never again been tried.

KRIS CULMER

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For more than a century, these road tests have been verifying, describing and illustrating the performance and characteristics in close detail, one new car at a time. Driving impressions have always been a key component part of them, around which other elements have changed. In early years, these test elements included benchmarking of braking effort, gradient climbing capability and rolling resistance. Later they expanded to take in acceleration, top speed and stopping distance, as well as cruising noise level. Cabin dimensions and measured weight became included too.

Today we use the Horiba MIRA proving ground in the Midlands to take similar performance benchmarks of new cars – and we've recently expanded the test's remit to take in braking stamina over repeated stops and, in the case of electrified cars, DC rapid-charging performance and measured acceleration at both high and low indicated state of charge. All are key indicators of the integrity of vehicle engineering in this emerging era.

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Matt Saunders, road test editor

ABARTH

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
500 Esseesse ★★★★☆ 25.3.09 Charm on a stick. Raucous and fun.	7.6	6.5	1135	35.8	-
500e Turismo ★★★⯪☆ 9.8.23 A stylish and entertaining pint-size EV but pricey and needs refining.	6.9	6.4	1395	-	142
595 Competizione ★★★⯪☆ 26.2.14 Great when it's good but tiring when it's bad.	7.5	6.4	1135	39.2	-

ALFA ROMEO

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Giulia Quadrifoglio ★★★★⯪ 29.3.17 Everything you would want a fast Alfa Romeo saloon to be. A triumph.	4.5	3.2	1700	35.7	-
Stelvio 2.2D 210 Milano Edizione ★★★⯪☆ 3.1.18 Spry-handling SUV is likeable, if short of the class's usual refinements.	6.8	7.0	1815	49.7	-
Stelvio Quadrifoglio ★★★⯪☆ 9.1.19 A real driver's car, but it stretches SUV-related bounds of acceptability.	4.0	3.3	1931	31.9	-
Stelvio 2.0T 280 Veloce AWD ★★★★☆ 28.6.23 Short on premium refinement but meets its discreetly sporty brief well.	5.7	5.3	1784	32.2	-

ALPINE

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A110 Première Edition ★★★★★ 16.5.18 Hilarious fun delivered in effusive and accessible fashion.	4.7	3.8	1125	45.6	-
A110 Légende GT ★★★★⯪ 9.3.22 The best fast A110 we've seen but not quite the definitive version.	4.8	3.9	1140	40.2	-
A110 R ★★★⯪☆ 15.11.23 Hardcore A110 has its lures but probably not enough of them for its price.	4.2	3.5	1094	39.7	-

ARIEL

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Atom 4 ★★★★★ 9.10.19 Track-slayer is unrivalled for built-in quality and dynamic character.	3.2	2.4	680	39.2	-

ASTON MARTIN

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Vantage ★★★★⯪ 18.9.24 Baby Aston grows up to spectacular effect. A machine of stunning breadth and likeability.	3.5	2.6	1745	28.5	-
DBS Superleggera ★★★★★ 21.11.18 Effortlessly fast and intoxicating to drive, the big Aston is better than ever.	3.7	2.7	1910	25.6	-
Vanquish ★★★★⯪ 26.3.25 Aston's blown V12 lives on in a devastatingly effective super-GT.	3.1	2.3	1951	25.8	-
DBX 707 ★★★★☆ 30.11.22 A better DBX to drive, but still leaves room for improvement.	3.3	2.8	2278	26.2	-

AUDI

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
A1 Sportback 35 TFSI S Line Style Edition ★★★⯪☆ 2.10.19 Luxury supermini lacks the polish to justify its high price.	7.9	8.4	1209	57.0	-
S3 Sportback ★★★⯪☆ 18.11.20 Audi delivers an effective if somewhat unlovable hot hatch.	4.8	4.2	1552	39.0	-
RS4 Avant ★★★★☆ 14.2.18 A hot estate that oozes class but is curiously short on charisma.	4.0	3.5	1790	36.7	-
S5 Launch Edition ★★★★☆ 15.1.25 Rounded sports saloon with a characterful V6 and new-found dose of driver appeal.	4.1	3.8	2027	33.7	-
A5 Sportback 2.0 TFSI 252PS Quattro S Line S Tronic ★★★⯪☆ 8.3.17 Sleek mid-sized executive fastback is still short of a selling point beyond its style.	5.7	5.3	1535	41.1	-
A6 Avant 40 TDI S Line S Tronic ★★★★☆ 14.11.18 High-tech throwback is a timely reminder of what Audi does best.	8.4	7.5	1710	50.1	-
RS6 Avant GT ★★★★☆ 5.2.25 Retro visual charm meets unprecedented dynamism in big-hearted estate.	3.2	2.7	2144	26.3	-
A6 50 TFSIe Quattro S Line ★★★★☆ 5.1.22 Hybrid tech boosts saloon's refinement, charm and running credentials.	5.7	5.2	2077	45.4	34
A7 Sportback 50 TDI Quattro Sport ★★★⯪☆ 11.7.18 Easy on the eye and to live with but let down by stolid dynamics.	5.8	5.3	1880	53.1	-
A8 L 60 TFSIe Quattro Sport ★★★⯪☆ 17.6.20 Technically impressive but not as cosseting as a limo ought to be.	-	-	2330	-	-
E-tron 55 Quattro ★★★★⯪ 26.6.19 A rounded, uber-luxurious addition to the premium EV niche.	5.4	4.2	2569	-	218
E-tron S Quattro ★★★⯪☆ 2.6.21 A slick, tech-laden luxury operator but no dynamic landmark for EVs.	4.2	3.6	2643	-	-
Q2 1.4 TFSI Sport ★★★⯪☆ 9.11.16 Fit for purpose but a less compelling option than it might have been.	8.1	8.2	1316	-	-
SQ2 Quattro S Tronic ★★★★☆ 20.3.19 More fun than you might expect from a crossover or an Audi S model.	4.5	4.1	1530	34.5	-
Q4 E-tron 40 Sport ★★★⯪☆ 7.7.21 Practical, pleasant and efficient but not a superior premium product.	8.1	7.8	2112	-	-
Q5 2.0 TDI 190PS Quattro S Line S Tronic ★★★★☆ 15.3.17 Like the previous Q5 but with additional class, dynamism and polish.	8.3	8.5	1770	42.5	-
SQ5 TSI Quattro ★★★⯪☆ 21.6.17 Mid-sized performance SUV bites off more than it can chew.	5.5	5.0	1870	32.6	-
SQ5 Sportback TDI Quattro ★★★⯪☆ 3.8.22 Not the sharpest fast SUV, but the real-world appeal is clear to see.	5.1	4.6	2023	49.0	-
Q6 E-tron Quattro Edition 1 ★★★⯪☆ 2.10.24 EV is hard to love, easier to recommend, with good dynamics and strong EV credentials.	5.3	4.3	–	2.8	247
Q7 3.0 TDI Quattro S Line ★★★★☆ 12.8.15 Chiselled, plush, suave and spacious. Only so-so to drive, though.	6.2	6.2	2245	-	-
SQ7 4.0 TDI Quattro ★★★★⯪ 26.10.16 A class-topping blend of superlative comfort and usable performance.	5.1	4.5	2330	37.9	-
Q8 50 TDI S Line ★★★★☆ 26.9.18 Striking and effective SUV-coupé leaves us wanting more.	6.9	6.7	2285	40.1	-
R8 V10 Plus ★★★★☆ 30.12.15 Supercar grips and goes even harder but wants for its predecessor's delicacy.	3.1	2.6	1730	-	-

BENTLEY

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Bentayga W12 ★★★★⯪ 18.5.16 Versatile, genteel, luxurious SUV with a silken sporting edge.	4.9	4.4	2440	-	-
Bentayga EWB Mulliner Blackline ★★★★☆ 24.4.24 Stretched SUV lacks the Mulsanne limo's charm but is a better luxury car by far.	4.4	3.8	2600	25.6	-
Continental GT W12 First Edition ★★★★⯪ 2.5.18 Superb luxury coupé has added dynamism but not enough to top the class.	3.6	2.9	2295	26.4	-
Continental GT Speed ★★★★☆ 22.12.21 Remains a wonderful grand tourer but can fall short as an entertainer.	3.4	2.7	2279	22.0	-
Continental GTC V8 S ★★★★⯪ 19.4.23 Sporty V8 execution adds vivacity to a car that makes you feel good.	3.6	3.2	2295	29.1	-
Flying Spur W12 ★★★★⯪ 15.7.20 Trounces rivals for driver appeal but not in every way that matters.	3.9	3.2	2500	32.5	-
Flying Spur Hybrid Mulliner ★★★★⯪ 17.8.22 Mightily convincing PHEV limo more than earns its Bentley wings.	4.4	3.9	2596	30.1	28

BMW

	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
120 M Sport ★★★⯪☆ 31.12.24 Credible and complete junior BMW still lacks distinguishing driver appeal.	7.3	6.8	1489	45.8	-

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
218i M Sport Gran Coupé	★★★☆☆	8.4.20	Junior Gran Coupé hits some high notes but fails to inspire.	8.8	8.4	1375	58.2	-
220i M Sport Coupé	★★★★☆	1.6.22	A good coupé rather than a great sports car.	7.3	7.3	1546	46.8	-
M2 Coupé Manual	★★★★½	12.7.23	Junior M car takes huge objective leaps but smaller subjective ones.	4.5	3.8	1687	32.1	-
320d M Sport Auto	★★★★★	15.5.19	BMW's one-time default-choice executive saloon hits even greater heights.	6.9	6.8	1639	63.3	-
330d xDrive M Sport Plus Edition Touring	★★★★½	15.1.20	An estate that's powerful, classy and great to drive – but with a price to match.	5.5	5.2	1922	52.6	-
330e M Sport	★★★★½	1.7.20	Slicker and sweeter-handling than the average PHEV. A true 3 Series.	-	-	1740	-	-
M440i xDrive	★★★★☆	6.1.21	A rounded, engaging and potent coupé let down only by its looks.	4.1	3.7	1775	44.0	-
M4 Competition	★★★★½	21.4.21	A very modern M car and a brilliantly versatile and enjoyable one.	3.9	2.9	1800	32.7	-
i4 M50	★★★★☆	19.1.22	Fast, refined and with lots of traditional appeal to convert sceptics.	4.1	3.2	2248	-	186
M4 CSL	★★★★☆	16.11.22	A next-level M car, with the more complex temperament to match.	3.6	2.7	1625	31.1	-
M5	★★★½☆	29.1.25	A technical leap, but one born more out of necessity than inspiration.	3.5	2.8	2373	27.3	35
i5 eDrive40 M Sport Pro	★★★½☆	29.11.23	Has dynamic appeal but less convincing than BMW's other EV saloons.	5.4	4.4	2213	-	235
550e xDrive M Sport Pro	★★★★☆	3.4.24	Undeniably capable and a fine plug-in hybrid sports saloon.	4.4	3.5	2232	40.1	47
i7 xDrive60 M Sport	★★★★½	15.2.23	It has taken huge strides as a luxury car – and still drives like a BMW.	4.5	3.4	2758	-	264
840d xDrive	★★★★☆	16.1.19	A likeable big GT, albeit not the most luxurious or rewarding on sale.	5.0	4.6	1901	49.2	-
M8 Competition Convertible	★★★½☆	5.2.20	Has attitude to spare but isn't the complete super-GT.	3.3	2.7	2020	31.6	-
M8 Competition	★★★½☆	3.6.20	Highly capable but doesn't truly satisfy as either a sports car or a GT.	-	-	1960	-	-
X1 xDrive23i M Sport	★★★½☆	25.1.23	A decent family crossover but a poor BMW.	6.4	6.0	1800	45.6	-
X4 M Competition	★★★☆☆	13.11.19	Fast and precise, if short on the big-time charisma that you would expect.	4.0	3.3	2028	29.0	-
X5 xDrive30d M Sport	★★★★☆	2.1.19	Better to drive than the SUV norm but not better across the board.	6.6	6.6	2279	43.1	-
X6 M Competition	★★★☆☆	20.3.24	Unyielding performance focus makes for a fast but compromised SUV.	3.5	3.1	2442	29.3	-
X7 M50i M Performance xDrive	★★★★☆	9.9.20	Stunningly large and enviably refined but too excessive for many.	4.8	3.9	2583	30.5	-
X7 M60i xDrive	★★★★☆	29.3.23	Uncompromising-looking X7 is seriously fast but laudably refined.	4.2	3.7	2600	28.9	-
iX xDrive50 M Sport	★★★★½	2.3.22	Takes the luxury EV to elevated heights, but its design is easy to criticise.	4.4	3.4	2593	-	252
Z4 M40i with Handschalter Pack	★★★★☆	21.8.24	Manual gearbox gives six-year-old roadster new depth.	5.7	5.9	1561	36.9	-

BMW ALPINA

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
B3 GT Touring	★★★★½	15.1.25	Last-dance B3 has mighty breadth and will go down as one of the all-time greats.	3.3	2.7	1910	29.4	-
B8 Gran Coupé	★★★★☆	22.9.21	Superbly rounded but lacking some dynamism implied by its looks.	3.5	2.8	2100	-	-

BYD

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Atto 3 Design	★★★☆☆	31.5.23	Lack of attention to detail detracts from the impressive battery tech.	7.0	6.2	1787	-	201
Seal Design	★★★½☆	17.1.24	Frustrating software lets down the mostly impressive hardware.	5.8	4.7	2116	-	279

CATERHAM

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Seven 160	★★★★☆	20.11.13	Fun entry-level version of B-road toy smacks just a little of compromise.	8.4	8.7	510	44.8	-
Seven 620S	★★★★½	9.3.16	Supplies fun intravenously with a mix of freneticism and road-going usability.	3.8	4.2	650	29.5	-
Seven 420 Cup	★★★★½	31.8.22	Track-day variant serves up sensational driving thrills – for a price.	4.2	3.4	560	35.3	-

CHEVROLET

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Corvette 3LT	★★★★☆	22.6.22	Big step up for charismatic, usable and temptingly priced American icon.	3.9	3.2	1679	32.9	-
Corvette Z06 3LZ	★★★★☆	16.8.23	Incredible engine and chassis makeover, but the price has to be right.	3.1	2.4	1670	26.1	-

CITROEN

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ami Colour	★★½☆☆	11.1.23	Cleverly conceived but hard to recommend, given its limited capabilities.	-	-	471	-	39
C3 Puretech 110 Flair	★★★½☆	28.12.16	Dynamically challenged, but a cheery design makes this supermini interesting.	9.6	9.4	1050	62.3	-
C3 Aircross Puretech 110 Flair	★★★½☆	7.3.18	Practical small crossover isn't outstanding to drive but is likeable nonetheless.	11.5	10.7	1159	39.5	-
C4 Puretech 130 Shine Plus Auto	★★★☆☆	26.5.21	Has rational and irrational appeal but lacks a fine-tuned execution.	9.5	9.2	1320	56.4	-
ë-C4 X Shine	★★★½☆	3.5.23	EV motoring done differently, with value, but its successes are qualified.	9.7	8.8	1623	-	162
C5 Aircross BlueHDi 180 Flair Plus	★★★½☆	13.2.19	Attractive and interesting, although its style is better than its substance.	9.0	8.5	1540	47.8	-
C5 X Puretech 180 Shine Plus	★★★★☆	28.9.22	Good value and comfy, this is the kind of car that Citroën should be making.	7.8	7.1	1502	47.8	-

CUPRA

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Born 204PS 58kWh V3	★★★½☆	6.7.22	As good as the family hatchback EV class gets in places but not as good as it could be.	6.7	6.2	1794	-	220
Born VZ First Edition	★★★★☆	9.10.24	An already fine electric car's driver appeal is lifted but not transformed.	5.4	4.2	1996	3.5	269
Leon Estate 310PS VZ3	★★★★☆	8.9.21	Fiercely quick and dependable but pulls the heartstrings only lightly.	4.9	4.3	1707	40.1	-
Leon 2.0 TSI 245PS VZ2	★★★★☆	27.7.22	Brilliantly rounded hot hatch shines in its simplest spec.	5.9	4.7	1468	43.4	-
Ateca 2.0 TSI 4Drive DSG	★★★½☆	23.1.19	Hot crossover is objectively impressive but lacks true driver reward.	4.9	4.4	1615	36.7	-
Formentor 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2 DSG	★★★★½	3.2.21	Versatile, interesting, rewarding. One of the best fast crossovers yet.	5.1	4.3	1583	36.4	-
Tavascan V1	★★★☆☆	5.2.25	Electric SUV is competent but not very compelling or memorable.	6.0	5.0	2129	3.2	246

DACIA

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Sandero Stepway TCe 90 Prestige	★★★★☆	28.4.21	Cut-price crossover is compromised in surprisingly few areas.	11.9	11.9	1096	54.1	-
Duster SCe 115 4x2 Comfort	★★★★☆	22.8.18	Comfortable, simple SUV keeps its budget family motoring star quality.	13.1	12.6	1286	42.2	-
Duster Hybrid 140 Journey	★★★★½	27.11.24	Notably improved yet barely any pricier.	9.7	8.7	1413	40.2	-
Jogger TCe 110 Comfort	★★★★½	20.4.22	Superb versatility, outstanding value and so likeable with it.	11.0	11.0	1267	48.5	-

DS

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
3 Crossback Puretech 155 Prestige	★★★☆☆	10.7.19	No design smash hit. Short on perceived quality and dynamic polish.	8.8	8.3	1205	48.6	-
4 E-Tense 225 Performance Line+	★★★½☆	29.6.22	High price and a list of niggles keep this family hatchback away from the top.	7.4	6.0	1706	44.7	26
7 Crossback Puretech 225 Prestige	★★★½☆	19.9.18	DS's first SUV is a competent but slightly bland addition to the class.	8.6	7.0	1616	44.6	-
7 E-Tense 4x4 360 La Première	★★★½☆	26.4.23	More focused and makes subtle gains, but its powertrain and ride frustrate.	5.7	4.6	1956	36.6	29
9 E-Tense 225 Performance Line Plus	★★★½☆	2.2.22	Posh saloon is alternative and devoted to its luxury remit but no show-stopper.	8.6	7.1	1886	44.7	20

FERRARI

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
296 GTB	★★★★★	21.12.22	Stellar modern-era Ferrari supercar has an unrivalled breadth of talent.	2.7	1.9	1648	37.8	15
SF90 Stradale	★★★★☆	3.11.21	Sets the performance benchmark but isn't a track-handling great.	2.5	1.8	1698	24.4	16

FIAT

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Panda 1.2 Easy	★★★★½	25.4.12	Was everything a city car ought to be but is now way past its prime.	14.6	15.6	1020	49.1	-
Panda 4x4 Twinair	★★★★☆	17.4.13	A lovable four-wheel-drive miniature that trades space for style and charm.	14.6	15.8	1195	44.2	-
500 1.4 Lounge	★★★★☆	19.9.07	Enjoyable city car with the substance to back up its style.	10.3	10.4	1065	42.8	-
500C 1.2 Pop	★★★★☆	5.8.09	Landaulet hits the spot every bit as well as the regular hatchback and is often better.	13.2	14.4	1035	48.3	-
500 Twinair Lounge	★★★½☆	24.11.10	Characterful and stylish, but its real-world economy lets it down.	11.7	13.0	1070	42.1	-
500e 42kWh Icon	★★★★☆	26.1.22	More than just an electric city car and a welcome return to form.	8.1	7.7	1365	-	142

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
600e La Prima ★★★½☆	27.3.24	Electric crossover is decent value and easy to drive but otherwise a bit easy to overlook.	8.8	7.7	1587	-	173

FORD

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Fiesta 1.0 Ecoboost 125PS Titanium ★★★★½	9.8.17	A dynamically brilliant supermini but no longer the best one.	6.6	7.8	1218	48.2	-
Fiesta ST ★★★★½	15.8.18	Great to drive and supreme value but not better than before in all aspects.	6.6	7.8	1218	48.2	-
Focus 1.5 Ecoboost 182PS ST-Line X ★★★★½	20.2.19	Better to drive and look at than before and impressively good value.	8.9	7.8	1417	43.8	-
Focus ST ★★★★☆	11.9.19	Big on character and performance but not quite truly immersive.	6.1	4.9	1433	40.7	-
Puma 1.0T 125PS MHEV Titanium ★★★★½	25.3.20	The driver's car the compact crossover class has been crying out for and more besides.	10.0	9.6	1260	50.0	-
Puma ST ★★★★☆	24.3.21	Well judged, versatile and fun. The jacked-up hot hatch done well.	7.2	6.2	1301	41.5	-
Explorer Extended Range Premium RWD ★★★½☆	23.10.24	Electric family crossover is better to drive than rivals, but at a cost.	5.8	4.8	2067	2.9	262
Kuga 2.5 PHEV ST-Line ★★★½☆	24.6.20	Good value and potentially frugal, but this SUV has more to give.	-	-	1844	-	-
Mustang Mach-E Extended Range RWD ★★★★☆	23.6.21	Worthy of the name? Perhaps not, but it's still impressive and likeable.	6.8	5.6	2130	-	-
Mustang Mach-E GT AWD ★★★☆☆	27.4.22	Has its moments but lacks the dynamism of a typical fast Ford.	4.2	3.5	2298	-	-
Mustang Dark Horse ★★★½☆	20.11.24	Brimming with character but more compromised than many of its forebears.	4.5	3.5	1853	26.1	-
Tourneo Courier 1.0 Ecoboost Titanium ★★★½☆	10.7.24	Has some Ford-typical star quality but not enough for the money.	10.8	10.6	1426	47.4	-
Transit Custom L2H1 320 2.0 EcoBlue 150PS Limited ★★★★☆	8.5.24	Likely to remain the default commercial vehicle, despite a high price.	12.1	11.8	1971	38.8	-
Ranger 2.0TD EcoBlue 205PS Wildtrak ★★★★½	14.6.23	Pick-up truck is practical, car-like to drive and generally hard to fault.	9.8	9.9	2348	36.6	-
F-150 Lightning Platinum ★★★½☆	17.5.23	Electric truck has huge utility and appealing range, but its size and price will put many off.	4.5	3.7	3121	-	288

GENESIS

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
G70 2.2 CRDi Luxury Line ★★★½☆	10.11.21	Likeable left-field choice struggles to threaten the establishment.	7.2	6.7	1751	60.4	-
Electrified G80 ★★★½☆	12.10.22	Electric limo doesn't quite hit the mark like its Kia and Hyundai platform-mates.	4.4	4.0	2349	-	272
GV60 Sport Plus ★★★★☆	24.8.22	Handsome, fast, sophisticated electric crossover is the best Genesis yet.	3.8	3.1	2192	-	220
GV80 3.0D Luxury 5-Seater ★★★½☆	15.9.21	Rich, spacious and comfortable but not a world-class luxury SUV yet.	6.7	6.6	2217	45.0	-

GWM ORA

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Funky Cat 48kWh First Edition ★★½☆☆	1.2.23	Electric hatch is decent value and has funky looks but is a mediocre experience overall.	7.7	7.2	1580	-	154

HONDA

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
E Advance ★★★½☆	26.8.20	More than just a pretty face in the EV crowd but its limited range is an issue.	7.9	-	1535	-	110
Jazz 1.5 i-MMD Hybrid EX ★★★½☆	7.10.20	Eminently practical, impressively frugal and pretty joyless to drive.	9.6	10.0	1248	57.0	-
Civic Type R GT ★★★★½	25.10.17	Hot hatch is a sheer delight for enthusiast drivers and their bank balances.	5.7	7.1	1400	57.0	-
HR-V e:HEV Advance Style ★★★½☆	24.11.21	Fine ergonomics and big on superficial charm but leaves us cold.	9.2	9.3	1397	43.2	-
e:Ny1 Advance ★★★☆☆	1.11.23	EV is charming in some ways but has too little substance to justify the price.	8.6	6.9	1756	-	211

HYUNDAI

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
i10 1.2 MPi Premium ★★★★☆	15.4.20	Smallest Hyundai regains leadership of the city car class.	12.3	12.9	999	52.5	-
i20 1.0 T-GDi 100 48V SE Connect ★★★½☆	24.2.21	Steady gains for a versatile runabout still lacking some personality.	9.7	10.1	1065	63.5	-
i20 N ★★★★½	25.8.21	N division's finest car to date. A serious hot hatch with real dynamic polish.	6.1	5.4	1231	50.6	-
i30 Tourer 1.4 T-GDi Premium SE ★★★½☆	13.9.17	Competent, servile, inoffensive-looking family estate offers little to like or dislike.	9.5	9.7	1425	48.9	-
i30 N Performance ★★★½☆	28.12.17	Hyundai's first hot hatch attempt is fast and full-blooded with rough edges.	6.4	5.6	1478	43.1	-
Ioniq 6 RWD Ultimate ★★★½☆	7.6.23	Usable, rangy and innovative EV let down by cabin packaging and ride.	7.2	6.2	2006	-	272
Kona 1.0 120PS Advance ★★★★☆	6.9.23	Hyundai brings some cheer, value and space to the compact crossover class.	10.4	10.3	1352	50.4	-
Tucson 1.6 T-GDi Hybrid Premium ★★★★☆	17.3.21	Tucson shows that Hyundai can do both style and substance.	7.6	6.2	1612	47.7	-
Ioniq 5 N ★★★★★	7.8.24	A little big and heavy, but compelling like no other EV to date.	3.5	2.7	2221	-	224
Santa Fe Hybrid 4WD Premium ★★★★☆	16.10.24	A superb lounge on wheels, but let down by its powertrain.	7.9	7.5	2007	32.9	-
Nexo ★★★½☆	12.6.19	Impressive effort that heads in the right direction for hydrogen fuel cell cars.	9.6	9.7	1852	-	-

INEOS

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Grenadier 3.0 T Fieldmaster ★★★½☆	20.9.23	Unquestionably a serious proposition but maybe lacking in innovation.	8.0	8.1	2682	20.9	-

JAGUAR

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
XE 2.0 200PS R-Sport ★★★★½	1.7.15	Junior saloon hits the spot, matching the best of its German rivals at their own game.	7.6	6.7	1530	48.7	-
XF Sportbrake 300PS R-Sport AWD ★★★½☆	17.4.19	Estate is built on enthusiast values but in need of a wider update.	6.6	6.2	1727	36.8	-
E-Pace D180 AWD SE ★★★½☆	11.4.18	Misses the mark for keen drivers but is a desirable SUV nevertheless.	9.9	10.5	1768	49.2	-
I-Pace EV400 S ★★★★½	12.9.18	Jaguar's landmark car strikes a heavy blow to Tesla's luxury EV monopoly.	4.5	3.5	2236	-	-
F-Pace SVR ★★★★½	24.7.19	Broad-batted and can vividly thrill but hasn't forgotten its SUV roots.	4.1	3.5	2070	29.4	-
F-Pace 400e R-Dynamic HSE ★★★★½	1.12.21	Facelift hits the mark. Electrification is a mixed but creditable success.	5.1	4.6	2264	-	24
F-Type V8 S Convertible ★★★★☆	12.6.13	As good to drive as it is to behold – but at a material and financial cost.	4.0	3.4	1810	28.5	-
F-Type P575 R AWD Coupé ★★★★☆	29.4.20	The same likeable bruiser behind those prettier features.	-	-	1743	-	-

JEEP

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Avenger Electric Summit ★★★½☆	24.1.24	Not perfect but successfully takes Jeep in a fresh direction.	8.3	6.9	1601	-	172
Compass 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited ★★★½☆	3.10.18	Pricey, pokey, gruff Jeep is a long shot for SUV market success.	11.0	11.5	1540	44.8	-
Compass 4xe S ★★★☆☆	16.2.22	Not without niche appeal but off the pace in too many respects.	6.4	5.7	1872	46.9	22
Renegade 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited ★★★½☆	28.10.15	Charmingly authentic but also pricey and rather rough and ready.	10.8	11.2	1502	52.6	-
Renegade 4xe Trailhawk ★★★☆☆	30.6.21	Electrified Jeep has some charm but is typically rough and ready.	6.7	5.6	1816	39.4	21
Wrangler 2.2 Multijet II Overland ★★★★☆	10.4.19	Off-road icon is now more competent on it.	9.0	9.1	2122	37.6	-

KGM

			0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Tivoli XLV ELX Auto ★★★☆☆	14.9.16	Practical, well-priced crossover is competent but far from compelling.	12.0	12.6	1469	-	-

TOP 3

BEST SUVs

1 Range Rover Sport

2 BMW X5

3 Dacia Duster

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

Road tests revisited

1974 ROLLS-ROYCE CORNICHE COUPE

Two-door Silver Shadow is replaced by new model with 10% more powerful engine. "Faster, with improved ride and handling and reduced levels of road noise", it "sets very high standards at the top end of the luxury car maker".

Price £15,409
Engine V8, 6750cc, petrol
Power 200bhp (est)
Torque 300lb ft (est)
Weight 2340kg
0-60mph 9.6sec
0-100mph 30.0sec
Top speed 122mph
Economy 11.9mpg

1924 BEAN 14HP

Nascent Dudley-based firm presents new, larger model, "a lavishly equipped family touring car of sturdy construction, commendable comfort and excellent manners". As if a speedometer, a petrol gauge, dimmable headlights *and* floor mats aren't enough, front brakes are an option.

Price £395
Engine 4 cyls in line, 2386cc, petrol
Power 32bhp at 2400rpm (est)
Torque na
Weight 1299kg
10-30mph 12.0sec
Top speed 49mph
Economy 26mpg

READ FULL ROAD TEST FOR FREE*

KIA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Picanto 1.0 MPI 2	★★★⯨☆	11.9.24	No great advance for the breed but likeable, capable and still here.	13.4	13.9	985	51.4	-
Ceed 1.6 CRDi 115bhp 2	★★★★☆	29.8.18	Big step up in the family hatchback class is a watershed moment for Kia.	9.9	9.6	1411	70.3	-
Proceed 1.4 T-GDi GT-Line S	★★★⯨☆	27.2.19	Alluring and interesting but not quite as special to drive as it looks.	9.5	8.9	1475	42.6	-
Xceed 1.4 T-GDi First Edition	★★★⯨☆	20.11.19	Looks good and drives well but lacks some practicality and polish.	9.3	8.7	1452	46.8	-
Soul EV Urban	★★★⯨☆	5.7.23	Not actually that cheap but likeable and complete.	8.0	8.3	1569	-	147
Niro EV 3	★★★★☆	7.9.22	A good family EV made better, despite some missed opportunities.	6.9	5.6	1739	-	246
EV3 81.4kWh GT-Line	★★★★☆	31.12.24	New-era Niro is rationally compelling but not a game-changer.	7.2	6.4	1858	2.6	265
Sportage 1.6 HEV 2WD GT-Line S	★★★⯨☆	15.6.22	Bold family SUV catches the eye but won't hold your interest to drive.	7.3	6.4	1658	44.8	-
EV6 77.4kWh RWD GT-Line S	★★★★☆	9.10.24	Not the outstanding EV it once was but still a likeably bold choice.	7.5	6.3	–	2.9	227
EV6 GT	★★★⯨☆	4.10.23	Lots of pace and usability for the money but not enough driver appeal.	3.6	2.7	2161	-	209
Sorento 1.6 HEV T-GDi AWD 2	★★★⯨☆	20.1.21	Lacks polish, but its abundant utility appeal and value shine through.	8.5	7.9	2006	43.3	-
EV9 GT-Line S	★★★★☆	31.1.24	Style, space, versatility and range for a more reasonable price than rivals.	5.1	4.6	2660	-	220

LAMBORGHINI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Huracán Performante	★★★★⯨	11.10.17	Breathtaking track makeover brings it close to greatness.	2.9	2.0	1590	22.4	-
Huracán Evo RWD	★★★★⯨	20.5.20	Finest driver's car Lamborghini makes is also the most attainable.	-	-	1389	-	-
Revuelto	★★★★⯨	4.12.24	New-era V12 Lamborghini is an extraordinary statement of intent.	2.5	1.7	1960	24.1	6
Urus	★★★★☆	3.7.19	Italy's latest 'mostro' has a driving experience to blow your mind.	3.3	2.8	2285	28.5	-

LAND ROVER

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Range Rover Evoque P300e R-Dynamic HSE	★★★★⯨	10.2.21	A better plug-in compact SUV. Expensive but slick and luxurious.	6.8	5.9	2158	32.7	24
Discovery Sport D180 AWD SE	★★★★☆	8.1.20	Off-road fidelity and character outweigh a lacklustre powertrain.	10.3	10.5	2145	47.5	-
Discovery TD6 HSE Luxury	★★★★⯨	12.4.17	A proper Land Rover, modernised, refined and as likeable as ever.	8.7	8.8	2230	-	-
Range Rover Velar D240 HSE	★★★⯨☆	30.8.17	Stylish, advanced and accomplished but in need of a better powertrain.	9.3	9.0	2089	48.2	-
Defender 110 P400 X	★★★★⯨	13.5.20	World-class capability. Brilliant on and off road – at a price.	-	-	2388	-	-
Range Rover Sport D300 Dynamic SE	★★★★⯨	2.11.22	Deeply appealing and deeply accomplished, with a price to match.	7.2	6.6	2511	42.5	-
Range Rover Sport SV Edition One	★★★⯨☆	28.8.24	More capable than most rivals, but others are more compelling.	3.9	5.1	2546	28.9	-
Range Rover D350 HSE	★★★★⯨	13.7.22	A fantastically well-isolated luxury car and fully paid-up capable 4x4.	6.3	6.0	2667	35.9	-

LEXUS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
LBX FWD Premium Plus Design	★★★⯨☆	29.5.24	Crossover convinces as a small premium car, but only just.	8.4	8.4	1306	45.2	-
NX 350h AWD Premium Plus Pack	★★★★☆	16.3.22	Interesting, refined and efficient, but not as polished as the best.	7.1	6.7	1812	44.7	-
RX 500h F Sport	★★★⯨☆	22.3.23	Classy and luxurious, but that might not be enough for keener drivers.	6.1	5.5	2088	31.7	-
ES 300h Takumi	★★★⯨☆	6.2.19	Boldly styled, economical saloon has a singularly rational but dry character.	8.7	7.6	1742	48.8	-
LS 500h Premier	★★★☆☆	6.6.18	Limo has never been more appealing or less competitive in key areas.	5.9	5.3	2404	42.2	-
RC F Ultimate Edition	★★★⯨☆	6.11.24	Bellows in some ways, whispers in others. A little flawed but never dull or boring.	4.7	3.8	1733	30.1	-
LM 350h AWD Takumi	★★★☆☆	7.2.24	MPV is a fascinating luxury-market curio but no threat to the old-school limo.	8.6	8.2	2368	40.5	-

LOTUS

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Eletre R	★★★⯨☆	24.7.24	There's plenty to like about the new Lotus but little sign of the old Lotus.	3.1	2.2	2682	-	216

MASERATI

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ghibli Diesel	★★★⯨☆	12.3.14	Saloon isn't lacking in style but is a little short on substance.	6.5	6.0	2040	40.4	-
Grecale Trofeo	★★★⯨☆	18.10.23	A belting engine but high-priced and not the best-driving Grecale.	3.6	3.2	2097	33.6	-
Levante Diesel	★★★☆☆	30.11.16	A mildly interesting also-ran, with a weak engine and so-so handling.	6.8	6.9	2205	41.5	-
Levante S Granlusso	★★★⯨☆	8.5.19	Better engine improves the class's curate's egg but can't redeem it.	5.1	4.5	2232	23.7	-
Granturismo Trofeo	★★★⯨☆	11.9.24	An appealing grand tourer that lacks some sophistication for the price.	3.6	3.1	-	33.0	-
Granturismo Folgore	★★★⯨☆	26.2.25	Assured and likeable but could only ever be bought with the heart – even sans V8.	2.9	2.3	2358	2.3	183
MC20 Cielo	★★★★☆	16.10.24	Dynamic iconoclast, old-school charmer, occasional GT. A unique supercar.	4.0	2.8	1783	29.6	-

MAZDA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
2 1.5 Skyactiv-G 90PS SE-L Nav	★★★★☆	22.4.15	The go-to option for keen drivers is also a convincing all-rounder.	10.4	11.0	1050	-	-
3 2.0 Skyactiv-X 181PS GT Sport	★★★★☆	6.11.19	Sweet to drive and great to behold, but the Skyactiv-X engine is no knockout.	9.1	9.1	1425	57.0	-
MX-30 145PS GT Sport Tech	★★★⯨☆	10.3.21	Has smart looks and a plush interior, but the first Mazda EV deserved more.	9.1	8.6	1663	-	-
CX-30 2.5 e-Skyactiv G Exclusive-Line	★★★★☆	19.2.25	Alternative powertrain is a credit to this voluble, unconventional compact SUV.	7.6	7.6	1422	45.2	-
CX-5 2.2D 150PS 2WD Sport Nav	★★★★☆	28.6.17	Still moderately left of field but now likeable in greater proportions.	9.4	9.2	1620	53.9	-
CX-60 e-Skyactiv D 3.3 RWD Exclusive-Line	★★★⯨☆	10.5.23	Old-school in all the best ways, but the ride is difficult to overlook.	7.6	7.2	1893	52.3	-
MX-5 1.5 SE-L Nav	★★★★⯨	2.9.15	An outstanding and usable sports car at an outstanding price.	8.4	7.9	1050	-	-

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*For three weeks from publication date. Pictured Bean 14hp sold by Bonhams

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

McLAREN

720S ★★★★★ 24.5.17
Sufficiently complete and exciting to dominate rivals and hugely fast.
2.9 2.0 1419 24.2 -

750S ★★★★☆ 19.6.24
McLaren's mainstay is a bit of a wild child – at times, to its own cost.
2.9 2.0 1412 28.8 -

Artura ★★★★⯪ 19.10.22
Brilliantly packaged, invitingly poised and wise use of electrification.
3.2 2.1 1552 32.9 17

Artura Spider ★★★★⯪ 6.11.24
Artura finds extra form in convertible guise.
3.1 2.2 1618 27.2 17

GT ★★★⯪☆ 27.1.21
Plenty of pace and purity, less GT-typical usability and refinement.
3.3 2.3 1580 34.2

MERCEDES-AMG

A45 S 4Matic+ Plus ★★★★⯪ 4.3.20
AMG brings its hottest hatch yet to life without harming usability.
4.1 3.3 1661 41.5 -

C63 S E Performance 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus Estate
★★★☆☆ 31.7.24
Fascinating engineering feat falls flat as an exciting super-estate.
3.3 2.8 2217 27.1 7.1

GT 63 4Matic+ 4-Door Coupé
★★★★⯪ 13.3.19
AMG defies physics with a four-door GT that handles beautifully.
3.3 2.7 2135 30.1 -

GT 63 S E Performance 4-Door Coupé
★★★⯪☆ 21.6.23
Rocket-ship GT with astonishing powertrain but still lacks driver reward.
2.9 2.5 2339 23.9 6

EQS 53 4Matic+ Night Edition
★★★★☆ 8.6.22
Good but doesn't quite live up to its spectacular on-paper potential.
3.6 2.8 2673 - 259

S63 E Performance Night Edition
★★★★☆ 2.10.24
Prodigiously quick, confoundingly slick in its handling, but has a coarseness to it.
3.5 2.7 2666 26.1 -

GLE 53 4Matic+ Premium Plus
★★★⯪☆ 14.10.20
Remarkable dynamic versatility but lacks some driver appeal.
5.4 4.9 2471 29.4 -

SL 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus
★★★⯪☆ 26.7.23
Stonking V8 doesn't quite redeem a car of as many sacrifices as gains.
3.5 2.8 1939 26.2 -

GT 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus Coupé
★★★⯪☆ 14.8.24
Fearsomely quick and truly usable but less lovable than before.
3.1 2.7 1972 30.7 -

MERCEDES-BENZ

A200 AMG Line Executive
★★★★☆ 24.5.23
Significant progress for a keen-handling and efficient premium hatch.
7.8 7.3 1396 59.3 -

A250e AMG Line Premium
★★★☆☆ 5.8.20
Falls some way short of a rounded 'premium' driving experience.
6.7 5.4 1665 57.8 -

B180 Sport ★★★★☆ 3.4.19
In an ever-shrinking niche, this compact MPV deserves consideration.
8.4 8.3 1405 51.3 -

CLA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus
★★★☆☆ 21.8.19
Nearer the mark to look at but still way wide of it as a driver's car.
6.8 6.1 1555 48.3 -

C300e AMG Line ★★★★⯪ 4.5.22
Long-range hybrid tech gives C-Class an outstanding selling point.
5.8 5.1 2005 49.0 48

E220d AMG Line Premium Plus
★★★★☆ 3.1.24
An effective blend of convention, comfort, luxury and modernity.
7.2 5.9 1917 65.8 -

E450d Estate Exclusive Premium Plus
★★★★⯪ 19.3.25
Big-hearted diesel has speed, space and opulence. The only car you would ever need.
4.9 4.3 2167 46.1 -

EQE 350+ AMG Line Premium Plus
★★★⯪☆ 4.1.23
Hot on comfort and tech but lacklustre on range, material quality and space.
6.0 5.5 2386 - 262

EQS 450 Business Class SUV
★★★⯪☆ 6.3.24
Ultra-luxurious seven-seater strays confusingly into MPV territory.
5.5 5.2 2899 - 265

S580e L AMG Line Premium Plus Executive ★★★★⯪ 6.4.22
Plug-in S-Class is the best of an otherwise ordinary generation.
5.2 4.2 2530 37.0 45

EQA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus
★★★☆☆ 17.11.21
Competent but entirely average. For the money, we expect better.
8.4 7.6 2030 - 200

GLB 220d 4Matic AMG Line Premium
★★★⯪☆ 16.9.20
Smart looking and practical but its identity feels stretched at times.
7.4 7.1 1810 55.4 -

EQB 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium
★★★⯪☆ 18.5.22
A versatile premium EV that doesn't easily command its premium.
7.7 6.8 2235 - -

GLC 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium Plus ★★★⯪☆ 13.9.23
Shines in places but doesn't notably elevate the GLC proposition.
6.5 6.0 1929 41.2 -

GLS 400d 4Matic AMG Line Premium
★★★⯪☆ 12.2.20
Has much to commend it but not enough to be the S-Class of SUVs.
6.5 6.0 2634 38.2 -

G350d AMG Line ★★★★☆ 17.7.19
Customary capability, charm and ego, now with 21st-century luxury.
7.5 7.2 2451 31.3 -

G500 AMG Line Premium Plus
★★★★☆ 25.9.24
Anachronistic, iconoclastic and expensive but very hard not to love.
5.1 4.5 - 30.7 -

CLE 300e AMG Line Premium Plus Coupé ★★★★☆ 13.11.24
Electrification brings traditional Merc strengths to a desirable mid-sized coupé.
6.1 5.5 2122 37.1 49

MG

3 Hybrid+ Trophy ★★★⯪☆ 12.6.24
Good value and with no serious vices but still lacks a final layer of polish.
6.8 6.2 1311 47.9 -

4 EV Long Range SE ★★★★☆ 5.4.23
Good value, useful and fun to drive to boot.
7.1 6.1 1692 - 185

5 SW EV Exclusive ★★★⯪☆ 25.11.20
MG's second EV does cheap motoring much better than the first.
8.0 7.1 1538 - 161

ZS EV Exclusive ★★★☆☆ 4.12.19
Practical, affordable MG fails to truly move the game on.
8.9 8.0 1556 - 113

ZS Hybrid+ Trophy ★★★☆☆ 22.1.25
Roomier, cleverer and better-equipped than you would expect for the money.
7.6 6.6 1422 41.5 -

MINI

Countryman C Exclusive
★★★⯪☆ 17.4.24
Spacious but sends mixed messages on family-friendly refinement.
8.7 7.7 1618 46.9 -

Aceman SE Exclusive
★★★⯪☆ 8.1.25
Compact SUV has the usual Mini charm but limited extra grown-up appeal.
6.8 5.7 1756 3.1 162

MORGAN

Plus Four ★★★⯪☆ 12.8.20
Refreshing and fun in that true Morgan way but lacks a little polish.
5.1 4.3 1013 54.0 -

Plus Six ★★★★☆ 10.4.24
The individualist's sports car made better.
4.4 3.3 1188 37.2 -

Super 3 ★★★★⯪ 9.11.22
Adds some subtle modernity to the 3 Wheeler's endless giggles.
6.9 5.9 644 43.5 -

NISSAN

Juke 1.0 DIG-T 117 Tekna ★★★⯪☆ 29.1.20
Impressive in some respects but outstanding in few.
11.9 11.8 1256 46.0 -

Qashqai 1.3 DIG-T 158 Tekna
★★★★☆ 28.7.21
Ticks the important family car boxes but its powertrain frustrates.
10.0 9.3 1412 44.9 -

Ariya 87kWh Evolve ★★★⯪☆ 26.10.22
Surprisingly traditional and luxurious but not wholly successful.
8.2 6.4 2109 - -

X-Trail e-Power e-4orce AWD Tekna
★★★★☆ 22.2.23
Capable all-rounder that deals effortlessly with everyday life.
6.6 6.0 1947 33.8 -

OMODA

5 1.6 TGDI Comfort
★★⯪☆☆ 20.11.24
Chinese SUV has some promise as a purely rational buy but feels under-developed.
7.4 6.3 1474 38.2 -

PEUGEOT

e-208 Allure Premium
★★★★☆ 6.5.20
Stylish, drivable, usable, reasonably priced – and the best small EV
- - 1455 38.2 -

308 1.2T Puretech 130 GT ★★★★☆ 25.5.22
A reminder of the old Peugeot magic. Small, supple and a bit special.
9.5 9.2 1358 55.3 -

408 Hybrid 180 GT e-EAT8 ★★★★☆ 11.10.23
Novel Peugeot shows an alternative path for the family car.
8.2 7.3 1746 42.1 40

508 BlueHDi 180 S&S GT Auto
★★★★☆ 24.10.18
Stylish and likeable but lacking the polish of more premium rivals.
8.8 8.5 1671 52.0 -

508 SW Hybrid 225 S&S Allure e-EAT8
★★★★☆ 8.7.20
This is a comfortable car that looks smart and feels classy.
- - 1720 - -

508 SW Hybrid4 PSE ★★★★☆ 5.5.21
Hits notable handling highs but feels less than sharp elsewhere.
5.7 4.7 1892 44.0 -

TOP 3

BEST HOT HATCHES

1 Toyota GR Yaris

2 Honda Civic Type R

3 Hyundai i20 N

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
e-2008 GT Line	★★★½☆	30.9.20	Cheaper versions impress; pricier ones won't worry class leaders.	9.5	8.9	1638	-	-
3008 1.6 BlueHDi 120 GT Line	★★★½☆	18.1.17	In challenging company, the 3008 promises more than it delivers.	12.0	12.1	1300	53.2	-
e-3008 73kWh Allure	★★★½☆	4.8.24	Electric family SUV is rich, handsome and refined but no technical tour de force.	8.5	7.1	2132	-	219
5008 Hybrid 136 GT	★★★☆☆	12.2.25	Concept car style can't save the function-follows-form engineering.	9.9	9.4	1736	44.0	-

POLESTAR

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
2 BST Edition 270	★★★½☆	12.4.23	A creditable attempt at electric car thrills, although not quite fully formed.	4.5	3.4	2161	-	188
3 Long Range Dual Motor Launch Edition	★★★★☆	12.2.25	Electric SUV is spacious, attractive and enticing to drive - with a few lapses.	4.6	3.8	2610	2.3	235

PORSCHE

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
718 Boxster	★★★★½	8.6.16	Better than ever objectively, but at the expense of vital subjective appeal.	5.4	4.3	1395	35.9	-
718 Cayman S	★★★★½	10.8.16	Still the greatest sports coupé out there, even if it doesn't sound like it.	4.8	3.9	1430	-	-
718 Spyder	★★★★½	1.4.20	Spyder's flat six rectifies most, if not quite all, of the 718's shortcomings.	4.3	3.5	1350	30.1	-
718 Cayman GT4 RS	★★★★★	14.9.22	A feast of noise, revs, handling poise and thrills. Incredibly special.	3.9	3.0	1444	27.1	-
911 GT3 PDK	★★★★½	11.8.21	Less versatile than some past GT3s but still spectacularly good.	3.4	2.7	1430	29.2	-
911 Turbo S	★★★★½	10.8.22	Has a questionable raison d'être but is engaging and awesomely capable.	2.5	2.0	1640	36.3	-
911 Carrera T	★★★★☆	30.8.23	Sharper 911 has a likeable simplicity but makes key compromises.	4.9	3.8	1456	39.1	-
911 GT3 RS	★★★★½	22.11.23	Esoteric even by hardcore 911 standards but simply monumental.	3.2	2.5	1476	26.7	-
911 Dakar	★★★★☆	10.1.24	Rally-raid-themed throwback charms like no other modern 911.	3.3	2.6	1660	36.0	-
911 S/T	★★★★★	3.7.24	Porsche's GT division alters its recipe to deliver an all-time great.	3.7	2.6	1408	30.9	-
911 Carrera GTS	★★★★½	5.3.25	Hybrid tech punts barnstorming Carrera into the supercar sphere.	2.8	2.6	1607	34.3	-
Macan Turbo	★★★★½	4.6.14	Luxury SUV meets sports car in a compact, well-priced package.	4.7	4.3	2050	30.9	-
Macan Turbo Electric	★★★½☆	19.2.25	Otherwise appealing EV is undone by chassis tech.	3.0	2.5	-	2.1	219
Cayenne S	★★★★½	21.2.24	Rebooted Cayenne impresses and the charming V8 is our pick.	5.0	4.3	2256	28.8	-
Cayenne Turbo	★★★★☆	5.9.18	As impressive as ever but not quite the driver's car it once was.	3.9	3.4	2307	31.5	-
Cayenne Turbo S E-Hybrid	★★★½☆	27.5.20	Technically impressive but fails to make a convincing case for itself.	-	-	2490	-	-
Cayenne Turbo GT Coupé	★★★★☆	20.7.22	Uncompromising rapid SUV is a bit of a monster – but a likeable one.	3.1	2.7	2251	26.1	-
Panamera 4 E-Hybrid	★★★★☆	22.1.25	Understated plug-in hybrid is a Swiss Army knife super-saloon.	3.8	2.4	2370	30.1	29
Taycan Turbo S	★★★★½	30.10.24	Porsche deftly keeps its superb EV on the boil.	2.6	1.9	2356	2.7	233

TOP 3

BEST FAMILY SUVs

1 Skoda Kodiaq

2 Kia EV9

3 Peugeot 5008

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

RENAULT

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Clio TCe 100 Iconic	★★★★½	27.11.19	Plusher, smoother, more mature. A car of substance as well as style.	11.6	10.9	1138	56.9	-
5	★★★★½	12.3.25	Accomplished and well priced, the 5 changes the affordable EV game.	7.7	7.2	1461	3.1	166
Megane E-Tech Techno	★★★½☆	23.11.22	Likeable and eye-catching, but rivals have moved the EV game on.	6.9	5.4	1688	-	198
Captur TCe 130 S-Edition EDC	★★★½☆	18.3.20	Second-generation Captur should prove popular, but not with this powertrain.	9.4	9.2	1363	53.1	-
Arkana E-Tech Hybrid 145 S-Edition	★★★½☆	13.10.21	Showy styling clothes an eminently sensible but unspectacular car.	11.0	10.1	1365	58.3	-
Scenic E-Tech Iconic Long Range	★★★★☆	26.6.24	The Scenic finally conforms but does so with style and substance.	8.1	6.3	1916	-	313
Austral E-Tech Iconic Esprit Alpine	★★★½☆	19.7.23	Clever hybrid and pleasant cabin but let down by clumsy dynamics.	8.5	6.9	1696	43.5	-

ROLLS-ROYCE

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ghost	★★★★½	13.1.21	Most technologically advanced Rolls-Royce is an exceptional limo.	4.7	3.8	2490	28.5	-
Phantom	★★★★★	4.4.18	The world's greatest and finest luxury car is now also the very best.	5.5	4.4	2780	28.4	-
Spectre	★★★★½	20.12.23	Superbly lavish and intoxicatingly refined, if shy of epoch-making.	4.1	3.1	2935	-	245
Cullinan Black Badge	★★★★☆	19.2.20	Far more likeable to drive than look at, for those who have a use for it.	4.9	4.2	2739	23.6	-

SEAT

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Ibiza 1.0 TSI SE Technology	★★★★½	19.7.17	Grown-up supermini shows its rivals how it's done – in most respects.	10.0	10.0	1047	55.6	-
Leon eHybrid FR	★★★½☆	2.12.20	Competent and efficient but verges on being forgettable to drive.	7.2	6.2	1558	46.3	26
Arona 1.0 TSI SE Technology	★★★★☆	15.11.17	Polished, mature all-rounder has since lost its class-best crown.	10.5	10.7	1149	40.9	-
Ateca 1.5 Eco TSI FR Black Edition DSG	★★★☆☆	25.10.23	Once-appealing Nissan Qashqai rival now shows some signs of neglect.	8.9	8.0	1396	44.4	-

SKODA

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Fabia 1.0 TSI 95PS SE Comfort	★★★★½	9.2.22	Comfy, spacious and good value, this supermini is Skoda at its best.	9.9	9.7	1117	58.7	-
Scala SE 1.5 TSI 150PS DSG	★★★½☆	31.7.19	Different from the bigger Octavia but perhaps not by enough.	7.9	7.3	1200	52.9	-
Octavia 2.0 TDI 150PS SE L First Edition Estate DSG	★★★★☆	2.9.20	Leads the charge to take Skoda upmarket and mostly succeeds.	8.4	8.7	1510	73.0	-
Octavia Estate vRS	★★★★☆	29.1.25	A fine estate made more engaging rather than a great hot hatch made a bit bigger.	5.9	4.8	–	37.6	-
Superb SE L 2.0 TDI 150PS Estate	★★★★★	17.7.24	The large, functional estate car modernised in all the right ways.	8.4	8.2	1673	68.7	-
Karoq 2.0 TDI 150PS Scout	★★★½☆	30.1.19	Practical, comfortable Skoda is short on charm and dynamic polish.	8.9	9.6	1629	47.1	-
Elroq 85 Edition	★★★★½	19.3.25	Comfortable, efficient, practical and intuitive; a well-rounded, class-topping EV.	6.1	5.0	2085	3.5	246
Enyaq iV 80 Lounge	★★★★☆	18.8.21	Practical, rangy, well priced. Hits a sweet spot in the EV market.	8.3	7.8	2098	-	262

SMART

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
#1 Premium	★★★½☆	8.11.23	Drivability frustrations mar an otherwise agreeable experience.	5.6	4.6	1861	-	229
#3 Premium	★★★½☆	15.5.24	Makings of an interesting alternative EV but let down by the finer details.	5.7	4.9	1832	-	205

SUBARU

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Crosstrek 2.0i e-Boxer Touring	★★★½☆	28.2.24	Improved manners for junior off-roader are welcome, if not transformative.	10.4	10.4	1620	45.3	-
Outback 2.5i Lineartronic Touring	★★★½☆	27.9.23	A pretty good answer to a question that only a few people asked.	9.3	8.7	1690	42.8	-
Solterra AWD Touring	★★★☆☆	15.3.23	A hint of Subaru-typical capability doesn't take this EV quite far enough.	6.7	6.2	2051	-	169

SUZUKI

				0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Vitara 1.6 SZ5	★★★½☆	29.4.15	The Vitara is solidly built in Suzuki's image – and that's fine with us.	9.5	9.5	1124	-	-
SX4 S-Cross 1.6 DDiS SZ4	★★★½☆	30.10.13	Quietly capable in most respects and remarkable for its parsimony.	10.0	10.1	1305	67.5	-

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Across 2.5 PHEV E-Four CVT	★★★★⯪	7.4.21	Excellent hybrid powertrain makes it one of the best PHEVs around.	6.4	5.8	1966	44.4	48

TESLA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Model 3 Standard Range Plus	★★★★☆	4.9.19	Wrinkles aside, it offers great electric performance and usability at this price.	5.8	4.7	1633	-	156
Model 3 Long Range	★★★★☆	14.2.24	Packs a real punch. Both updated Model 3s are fine propositions.	4.4	3.4	1846	-	277
Model Y Long Range AWD	★★★★☆	23.3.22	A far better electric car than a premium SUV.	4.7	3.6	1978	-	234
Model S P90D	★★★★⯪	20.4.16	Great EV, intriguing driver's car. Not quite the perfect luxury GT.	3.5	3.0	2220	-	214
Model S Plaid	★★★⯪☆	2.8.23	Astonishing pace but not a fully rounded performance saloon.	2.4	1.7	2220	-	301
Model X 90D	★★★★☆	15.2.17	High-rise EV strains under SUV brief but still feels like a history maker.	5.2	4.2	2508	-	147

TOYOTA

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Aygo X Limited Edition	★★★⯪☆	11.5.22	A mostly very grown-up small car but also an expensive one.	15.6	16.5	974	58.7	-
Yaris 1.5 Hybrid Design	★★★★☆	23.9.20	Grows not only in stature but also in ability and subjective appeal.	9.2	8.8	1140	65.0	-
GR Yaris Circuit Pack	★★★★★	3.3.21	Toyota, on a roll with driver's cars, provides yet another winner.	5.2	5.0	1283	39.2	-
Corolla 2.0 Hybrid Design Touring Sports	★★★★☆	5.6.19	A big step up for Toyota in a vital sector and a better hybrid to boot.	8.5	7.7	1537	52.6	-
bZ4X AWD Vision	★★★⯪☆	18.1.23	A decent effort all round but not exceptional in any way.	6.4	5.9	2023	-	208
Mirai Design Premium	★★★★☆	16.6.21	Impressive hydrogen fuel cell car has made strides but remains hamstrung overall.	8.7	8.3	1937	-	-
GR Supra Pro	★★★★☆	14.8.19	Fast, usable and has plenty going for it but leaves us wanting more.	4.4	3.6	1495	39.0	-
Hilux 2.8 D-4D GR Sport	★★★⯪☆	1.3.23	Gazoo-branded Ford Ranger Raptor rival is formidable but lacks fun factor.	10.0	9.5	2241	32.5	-

VAUXHALL

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Corsa 1.2 Turbo 100PS Ultimate Nav Auto	★★★⯪☆	22.1.20	Supermini is improved in many ways but lacks the appeal to match its price.	11.2	11.5	1171	51.8	-
Astra 1.2 Turbo 130PS GS Line	★★★⯪☆	5.10.22	Family hatchback's gentle push upmarket is only a qualified success.	9.9	9.2	1304	55.3	-
Crossland X 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite	★★★☆☆	7.6.17	Typically practical and well priced, but Vauxhall can do better.	9.8	10.3	1278	54.2	-
Mokka 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite Nav Premium Auto	★★★⯪☆	12.5.21	The driving experience sells a brave design effort just a little short.	9.3	9.1	1238	48.6	-
Grandland X Hybrid4 Ultimate Nav	★★★☆☆	22.4.20	Inspires big expectations and delivers few, but it's an interesting fleet option.	-	-	1800	-	-
Combo Life 1.5 Turbo D 100PS Energy	★★★⯪☆	27.12.18	Usable, spacious and practical, if not very pretty to look at.	14.7	16.2	1552	60.1	-

VOLKSWAGEN

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
Polo 1.0 TSI 95PS SE	★★★★⯪	31.1.18	Brings 'big car' space, class, kit and finish to this class like never before.	10.7	11.2	1145	57.1	-
Polo 2.0 TSI GTI+	★★★★☆	1.8.18	A usable, quick and vastly competent effort but not the most thrilling.	6.7	5.9	1342	46.8	-
Golf 1.5 eTSI 150PS Style DSG	★★★★⯪	22.7.20	Additional strengths and familiar ones carry it back to the class lead.	8.3	7.8	1330	60.0	-
Golf 1.5 TSI eHybrid Style	★★★★⯪	23.10.24	New plug-in Golf takes the PHEV hatchback's status to greater heights.	7.2	6.1	1619	46.5	-
Golf GTI	★★★⯪☆	25.9.24	'Mk8.5' version of hot hatchback is slick and effective but not a big enough step forward.	5.3	4.4	–	47.2	-
Golf R	★★★★☆	14.4.21	Most entertaining distillation of the Golf R formula yet – for a price.	4.4	3.7	1520	43.9	-
ID 3 Pro Performance Life	★★★★☆	31.3.21	Bland but with the substance to further the zero-emissions push.	7.0	6.5	1757	-	145
Arteon 2.0 BiTDI 240PS 4Motion R-Line	★★★⯪☆	27.9.17	Considered approach produces an executive flagship short on sparkle.	6.5	6.2	1866	55.6	-
Arteon eHybrid Elegance Shooting Brake	★★★⯪☆	9.6.21	Striking PHEV appears radical but upholds Volkswagen's traditions at heart.	7.1	6.0	1783	52.5	-
ID 7 Pro Match	★★★★⯪	13.3.24	Volkswagen finds some electric form in an unexpected format.	6.1	5.1	2162	-	239
T-Roc 2.0 TSI 190PS 4Motion SEL DSG	★★★★⯪	24.1.18	Shows performance verve, dynamic completeness and stylish swagger.	6.7	6.5	1534	37.5	-
T-Roc 1.5 TSI Evo R-Line Cabriolet DSG	★★⯪☆☆	10.6.20	It brings little worth having to the compact cabriolet niche.	-	-	1540	-	-
Tiguan 1.5 eTSI 150PS R-Line	★★★⯪☆	22.5.24	Functional and mature, but this isn't the engine or trim we would go for.	9.4	9.2	1606	44.9	-
ID 4 GTX Max	★★★⯪☆	27.10.21	GTX adds flavour to ID 4 but doesn't reimagine 'GTI' for the EV age.	6.2	5.6	2220	-	200
Touareg 3.0 TDI 4Motion R-Line Tech	★★★⯪☆	8.8.18	An inoffensive if forgettable bid at a luxury market breakthrough.	7.2	6.6	2292	41.6	-
Touareg 3.0 TSI eHybrid 4Motion Elegance	★★★⯪☆	5.6.24	It's versatile and likeably unpretentious but won't be a default company car choice.	6.2	5.7	2446	34.1	26
Touran 2.0 TDI 150PS SE Family DSG	★★★★☆	3.2.16	A spacious, refined and classy all-rounder – albeit a slightly bland one.	9.9	9.7	1666	-	-
Multivan 1.4 eHybrid Style	★★★★☆	8.3.23	Latest Volkswagen 'bus combines the best bits of both car and van.	8.4	7.1	2243	37.9	14
ID Buzz 77kWh Style Pro	★★★★☆	8.2.23	It costs plenty but offers versatility and luxury accomplishments.	9.5	9.1	2498	-	185
Grand California 600	★★★⯪☆	2.1.20	Grandest California is classy but not half as clever as its smaller namesake.	15.8	16.7	3095	28.5	-
Transporter Sportline Black Edition Kombi SWB	★★★☆☆	30.3.22	Not compromised but hardly enhanced by its sporting agenda.	9.1	9.0	2108	39.1	-
Passat eHybrid 204PS Elegance	★★★★☆	13.11.24	Rounded and with good PHEV credentials, but less compelling than its sister car.	7.2	6.4	1836	44.5	73

VOLVO

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
EX30 Single Motor Extended Range Plus	★★★☆☆	1.5.24	Not enough key strengths – and not enough Volvo pragmatism.	5.7	5.1	1779	-	179
C40 Recharge Twin Ultimate	★★★⯪☆	13.4.22	A transitional model for Volvo that doesn't go quite far enough.	4.4	3.6	2172	-	194
XC40 D4 AWD First Edition	★★★★⯪	7.2.18	Wieldy, classy and simple. As good as its bigger brothers, if not better.	8.5	8.5	1735	43.8	-
XC60 D4 AWD R-Design	★★★⯪☆	5.7.17	The right product at the right time but lacking the right dynamic finish.	8.9	8.9	1836	48.9	-
XC90 D5 AWD Momentum	★★★★☆	17.6.15	A very impressive all-rounder with its own distinctive appeal.	8.3	8.3	2076	-	-
V60 D4 Momentum Pro Auto	★★★★☆	27.6.18	Fine-looking, capable and practical estate with only a few demerits.	8.9	8.3	1669	43.1	-
V60 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design	★★★★⯪	21.9.22	Strong hybrid system gives ageing Volvo a lot of fresh appeal.	4.9	4.3	2036	38.0	51
V90 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design	★★★★⯪	11.11.20	Hardly revolutionary but exceptionally appealing nonetheless.	5.6	4.9	2109	41.9	-

XPENG

Model	Rating	Date	Verdict	0-60mph	30-70mph	Kerb weight	Touring economy	Electric range
G6 RWD Standard Range	★★★⯪☆	26.2.25	Chinese electric SUV lacks inspiration but has plenty of rational appeal.	6.8	6.2	2067	3.3	208

WHAT'S COMING WHEN

Ford Puma Gen-E Spring
UK's best-seller goes electric with 233-mile range, £30k price.

BMW iX3 September
BMW's first Neue Klasse EV is a crucial Audi Q6 E-tron rival.

Mercedes CLA EQ October
Host of new tech gives us a game-changing 492-mile EV.

SCAN THE CODE FOR THE FULL LIST

Why I love...
TOLMAN ENGINEERING

BY SAM PHILLIPS

Tolman's 205 GTi restomod retains the spirit of the original

I was about four years old when I first laid eyes on a Peugeot 205: an Alpine White 1.9-litre GTi. Even then I knew it was special, and its clean-cut, Pininfarina-penned lines etched themselves onto my brain as the genesis of what would become my hot hatch infatuation. Later, I was shuttled to and from school in one, and 20 years on it's still part of the family, albeit currently residing under a sheet and in a very sorry state of affairs.

But while the 205 was pleasing to the eye and rewarding to drive, it was also a rather tricky hot hatch to tame. Not only that, but it was prone to being struck down by various engine issues, too (go on, ask me how I know).

You can imagine my excitement, then, when Warwickshire firm Tolman Engineering took Peugeot's seminal '80s hot hatchback and reworked, fettled and fine-tuned it into the car it was always destined to be.

The Tolman Edition 205 GTi is on the face of it a restomod, although in many ways it doesn't quite fit the brief. A vast number of restomodders seem hell-bent on making astronomically priced, highly exclusive collectibles that are a far cry from the original car. But even if I'm after an improved version of a classic car – with modern technology added here and there – I still want it to retain the spirit of the original. And that is exactly what Tolman has achieved with its 205.

When it took part in Britain's Best Driver's Car 2023, the Tolman GTi struck a chord with our testers for its engaging drive on the road and its playful nature on track. With its reworked engine and trick differential, it was as fun to punt around Anglesey as the eventual winner of the contest, the Lamborghini Huracán Sterrato.

> **"It was as fun around Anglesey as the Huracán Sterrato"**

This hot hatch got the better of two BMW M cars at BBDC 2023

What I also love about Tolman's 205 is the balance of old and new: glance at the instrument cluster and you'll assume they're the original Veglia items, but they are in fact digital recreations that swap to T16-style dials when you switch the car to Sport mode. Very neat. This is the sort of sympathetic attention to detail enthusiasts crave from a restomod.

The price for such a capable and usefully modernised machine? Well, there's no easy way of saying it: £60,000, or double that for a fully loaded example.

So yes, it's pricey, if not astronomically so, but then this is a car that is put together by a company that runs its own team in the British GT Championship and which has an excellent reputation for restoring historic racing cars. Tolman also restores Lotuses, and it has churned out modified versions of the Sunbeam Lotus and, more recently, a Ford Escort XR3i.

Tolman is clearly on a mission to become a bigger player in the restomod game, and it has every right to be ambitious. No longer do we have to lament wistfully that "they don't make 'em like that any more", because Tolman does. In fact, it makes 'em even better.

What we did this week

HELLO DOWN THERE

As annoying as the process of flying can be, there's plenty of interesting stuff to see from 30,000ft. I love staring out of the window in search of familiar landmarks: I've spotted the Porsche test track at Weissach and Monza circuit, and a recent flight into Heathrow gave me a great view of McLaren's Technology Centre. Had I not forgotten my binoculars, I could've scouted out some new models. **JACK HARRISON**

GUZZLIN' GOSLINGS

Petrol stations attract no more than rats and pigeons in my neck of the woods, so I enjoyed the racket made by this flock of geese at Annandale Water services on the A74(M). Careful, though: I've read that this not-so-harmless gaggle has learned to scrounge for food from innocent motorists... **MATT PRIOR**

ODD ONE OUT

My first chance to catch up with Audi CEO Gernot Döllner since the brand reversed its confusing even/odd model naming strategy. What prompted the move? "We had a preview with the A6 when it was named A7, and all night long we had to explain what kind of car it was." Cue a hurried phone call to the badge factory and a big glue order, and Audi was able to avoid a 'Milano moment'... **FELIX PAGE**

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*With Solutions Personal Contract Plan. 18s+. Subject to status. Ordered by 31 March 2025 from participating Retailers. Indemnities may be required. Subject to changes in vehicle or equipment prices. May be varied or withdrawn at any time. Freepost SEAT Financial Services. Accurate at January 2025. Official fuel consumption for the SEAT Ateca Range mpg (litres/100km) combined: 39.8 (7.1) – 47.1 (6.0). Combined CO_2 emissions 159 – 137 (g/km). Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO_2 figures with other vehicles tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. Data correct at 01/2025.